Title: Historical Influences of the Oromo in Abyssinia Proper – A Relegated History

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Abstract: This chapter recovers the deep yet strategically marginalised history of Oromo influence within Abyssinia proper. By tracing the genealogy of Oromo leadership during the Zemene Mesafint (Era of Princes) and other political eras, Demmeksa challenges dominant narratives that erase Oromo contributions to Abyssinian statecraft. The chapter systematically outlines cultural, military, and institutional integrations, and highlights how the Oromo helped shape what later became foundational to modern Ethiopia, even as they were denied symbolic ownership.

Keywords: *New order in East Africa, Oromo nationalism, Oromo nation, Kushite identity, Settler colonialism, Indigenous governance, Gadaa System, Ethiopian state formation, Horn of Africa politics, Kingdom of Abyssinia, Relegated history*.

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Chapter 8

Historical Influences of the Oromo in Abyssinia Proper: A Relegated History

Introduction

Regarding the historical relationship between the Oromo and the kingdom of Abyssinia, two apparent paradoxes are prevalent: on the one hand, many contend that the Oromo have had no or little place in the Abyssinian monarchy, while on the other hand, some Abyssinian Ethiopia-nists contend that the Oromo nation was part of the kingdom of Abyssinia. This study shall illustrate that both contentions are incorrect. The first is because the Oromo had been warlords and monarchs in the kingdom. The latter is so because only the assimilated and politically integrated minority groups of northern Oromo had been part of the kingdom. The vast Oromo country, which was almost the present Oromia, was incorporated into the kingdom of Abyssinia-cum-modern Ethiopia, as shall be discussed in the next Chapter, only in the last decades of the 19th century. Until then, Oromia freely governed itself partly by *Mootiis* but mainly by its Gadaa government. This chapter shall discuss and illustrate the early influences of the Oromo on the Abyssinian kingdom from the reign of

Atse Susenyos to *Atse* Iyasu II (1604-1755) and the political dominance and the Oromo rule of the kingdom during the *Yajjuu* Dynasty (1769–1855). Ultimately, it summarizes the relegated history of the Oromo in the Abyssinian kingdom.

Early Influence of the Oromo

The influence of the Oromo in the emerging Abyssinian monarchy before the Jihad war of Ahmad ibn Ibrahim Al-ghazi (Gragn) has been confirmed in some records (for example, Gidada, 2016). This early influence, however, appears to be marginal in the available records. This is perhaps because of inadequate historical and literary tradition in those early periods. Even though *Atse* Zera Ya'ekob (r. 1434-1468) is credited for the introduction of art and literature in Abyssinia, the kingdom introduced a literary tradition of recording historical accounts during the reign of *Atse* Sertse Dengle (r. 1564–1597). This was towards the beginning of *Gadaa Duuloo* (1594–1602). Therefore, it is not surprising that records of the earlier influence of the Oromo on the Abyssinian kingdom or its predecessors are not available except in a few religious records.

Abba Bahrey's record was, however, a meaningful Abyssinian literary record. It is the only reasonably detailed historical record that recounts the military impact of the Oromo on the kingdom of Abyssinia during the 1520-1590s. The then kingdom of Abyssinia, which is referred to as 'Abyssinia Proper' in this study, was limited to the northern part of modern Ethiopia that may roughly be represented by a combination of most of Amhara and Tigray States, a small part of central Oromia and northern SNNP, and most of south-central Eritrea. According to this record, the direct military impact of the Oromo on the kingdom of Abyssinia and its monarchs started at least immediately after the kingdom's devastation by the army of Ahmad ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi in the 1530s. A few decades later, according to Abyssinian sources, the Oromo moved further north into the kingdom's heart and controlled Wembera, Damot (southern Gojjam), Dembia (north of Lake Tana), Wollo and many other places. When *Atse* Minas died in 1563, the Oromo had overtaken a third of the Abyssinian kingdom (Bechhaus-Grest, 2005, p. 1182). By the end of *Gadaa Birmajii* (1578–1586), the Oromo had "invaded all the areas inhabited by Christians except Tigre" (Tafla, 1987, p. 165). With this "invasion," the Oromo recaptured vast territory lost to the aggressively expanding Abyssinian kingdom over centuries. By then, they had also reclaimed territories from other peoples. At the beginning of the 17th century, the Oromo controlled about two-thirds of the territory of modern Ethiopia.

In all probability, these Oromo military successes had political and administrative influences on the kingdom of Abyssinia. With their reclaim of

territories from the kingdom and involvement in Abyssinian military and socio-cultural life, the Oromo's direct and indirect political and administrative influences would only continue to grow in the subsequent decades. The following section briefly discusses these early influences.

Atse Susenyos (r. 1607–1632) and the Oromo

By the second half of the 16th century, the Oromo had advanced north in their offensive-defense against the Abyssinian kingdom and started to threaten the very seat of the monarchy. One group of the Oromo army had annihilated *Jan Amora,*[1] a military division of the imperial army under the command of *Ras Hamalmal*, at Daggo in Tegulat in the second half of the 16th century. This was a significant victory for the Oromo for two reasons. First, though its name was used to refer to the whole of the Shewa for some time, Tegulat was the second "capital" of Abyssinia after Aksum (Reclus, 1892, p. 200) and attacked close to the seat of the Abyssinian monarchy was threatening its very existence. Second, it demonstrated that the Oromo could defeat the Amhara even in the hid-out of the rugged terrains of Shewa that was Tegulat.

During the same period, the first close contact between the Oromo and the Abyssinian monarch occurred somewhat accidentally when the young prince of the latter, Susenyos (ሱስኒዮስ), was returned in a prisoner exchange. The *Booranaa* Oromo captured him in a battle (Tolossa, 1992; Tafla, 1987) during *Gadaa Roobalee* (1570-1578) (Etefa, 2012, p. 17). According to Budge (1928), an Oromo from *Booranaa*, from the clan of *Konno,* carried off the young boy, took him to his house, and wanted to raise him as his son. Still, shortly after, he was rescued and sent to Empress Admas Mogasa (according to Etefa (2012, pp.17, 22), Silus Haile), the mother of *Atse* Sertse Dengle (p. 384). He was rescued during *Gadaa Birmajii* (1578-1586) (Etefa, 2012, p. 17). The Oromo took care of Susenyos due to his title during his captivity (Tolossa, 1992). Besides, he was raised as an Oromo son (Legesse, 2006). After the death of *Atse* Sertse Dengle in 1597, Susenyos fled from the Abyssinian power struggle. They returned to his Oromo friends, seeking protection and safety in the West Shewa Zone of Oromia, near River Mugar. They protected him and kept him safe. He stayed with them from 1597 to 1604(07).

During those years, Susenyos effectively became an Oromo. He participated in several Oromo campaigns as an Oromo, carrying their flag and speaking their language (Baissa, 2004, p. 107). "Thousands of Oromo followed him. ... Oromo attacks on Amara, Begemeder, Enarya, Gojjam, and Walaqa

between 1597 to [*sic*] 1607 were essentially associated with Susenyos" (Etefa, 2012, p. 20). As *Abbaa Gadaa*, he led the Oromo campaign against the kingdom of Enarya where, with the *Sadachaa* confederacy, he succeeded in killing Gumcho, the governor, but failed to take the kingdom (Etefa, 2012, p. 20). He had learned the Oromo language, culture, way of life, and military organisation (Pankhurst, 1997, p. 442). After living many years among the Oromo, adapting their language and tradition, and learning their administration, justice, and warfare systems, he had become an assimilated Oromo (Tafla, 1987, p. 187).

Susenyos benefited more from his relationship with the Oromo. The *Booranaa* Oromo of Shewa[2] fought many of his battles. He relied on his Oromo followers in his struggle against the Amhara feudal lords and his ambition to ascend the Abyssinian throne. They helped him defeat those who occupied the throne and those who competed with him to ascend it. Ultimately, his elite Oromo army helped him take the kingdom's throne. The final decisive victory was achieved by the critical support of 400 elite Oromo warriors. One prominent Ethiopian historian further explains:

> In the end, in the battle on 10 March 1607 in Gojjam at the place called Debre Zeit at the foot of the hill known as Gol, Atse Susenyos defeated the mighty army of Atse Ya'ekob with his 400 Oromo soldiers. In the battle, Atse Ya'ekob and the Egyptian Abuna Petros were killed. As a result, Atse Susenyos became the only leader and commander of the Gondarine Dynasty. (Delebo, 1982 Eth. C., p. 159) [Translation from Amharic]

A year later, Susenyos was crowned, according to the established tradition of Abyssinian kings at the church of St. Mary of Zion in Aksum, "*Siltan Seged*, king of kings of Abyssinia" on 18th of March 1608[3] (Budge, 1928, p. 385; Munro-Hay, 1991). The coronation was a spectacle where 25,000 infantry and 1500 cavalry followed him to Aksum (Munro-Hay, 1991). He chose to be king of Abyssinia, not *Abbaa Gadaa* of the Oromo.

However, this event became a critical point of departure for Susenyos and the Oromo. The Oromo were divided soon regarding their support for the new *Atse*. Those who saw him as their *Luba* opposed him becoming an absolute monarch. The monarchy was in sharp contrast to the Oromo republican and democratic governments. Hence, the Oromo were divided. Initially, only a few Oromo communities and his Oromo army supported him in his new role. Susenyos, an adopted and assimilated Oromo, had decided to be a monarch than *Abbaa Gadaa*. This, in effect, was him becoming an enemy of the Oromo. Thus, only his loyal followers and allies remained with him; the rest decided to dethrone him. As Atsme Giorgis remarks, "All [Oromo] decided to overthrow him once and for all" (Tafla, 1987, p. 311). This was the beginning of the

prolonged hostility between the Oromo and the new *Atse* of the kingdom of Abyssinia.

Perhaps because of the new level of animosity, the kingdom of Abyssinia was under massive attack by the Oromo at a particular time during the reign of Atse Susenyos. In 1610, the Oromo formed a new pan-Oromo Confederation against the kingdom, and their expansion into Gojjam and Begemeder "became increasingly organised" (Etefa, 2012, p. 22). It was an Oromo group, mainly constituted from Arsi (*Baarentuu*), that decided to attack the army of Susenyos in Gojjam, triggering the formation of a new pan-Oromo Confederation against *Atse* Susenyos in 1610 (Etefa, 2012, p. 22). They pressured *Atse* Susenyos, as *Atse* Zedengle before him, to request military assistance from Europe against them in his letter to Pope Paul V and the king of Portugal in 1610, for which he received a promise of military aid. However, no secular soldiers would arrive (Etefa, 2012, p. 22).

The alignment of some *Booranaa* Oromo communities with *Atse* Susenyos infuriated the *Baarentu (mma)* Oromo than the rest of the *Booranaa* Oromo. Though the *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa* of *Booranaa* were settled adjacent to the centre of the Abyssinian kingdom of the time, Gojjam, in the northwest, the attack came from the Baarentuu Oromo who was settled mainly adjacent to the kingdom of Adal in the east. Indeed, the *Liiban* and *Marawwa* Oromo also made some inroads in Gojjam and Begemeder: "Following their victories, the Marawwa and other Oromo communities formed a confederation to undertake expansion into all the lands between the Tekaze River and Lake Tana" (Etefa, 2012, p. 24). Nevertheless, Susenyos and his kingdom prevailed, thanks to his limited successes against frontier Oromo communities.

The Oromo, however, continued to expand into the heartland territories of the kingdom. By 1607, the *Booranaa* League was formed against the kingdom by Oromo communities from both *Booranaa* and *Baarentuu,* perhaps named so because of the 'seniority' of the *Booranaa* (Etefa, 2012, pp. 24-25). The league intensified its attacks in multiple directions as a pan-Oromo attack. The continued distress on the kingdom, possibly after the formation of the league, is evident from one account in the chronicle of *Atse* Susenyos (1601–1632):

> After the Krämt [= the rainy season] was over, in the month of Ṭəqəmt, there took place a great disturbance throughout the territories of the kingdom: It was heard that the entire Kärräyyu went down in the direction of Tigray; Märäwwa went up in the direction of Bägemdər, and Ittu[4] wanted to strike Gwäžžam. (Haile, 2016, p. 3)

The Oromo had already reached these regions, but their goal this time was consolidation. Distressed after the multi-directional attacks of the *Booranaa* league, *Atse* Susenyos abandons Tigray and chooses to save Gojjam (Tafla,

1987; Etefa, 2012). From Begemeder, he turned south to Gojjam, where he found Ras Se'ele Kiristos triumphed over one group of Oromo. Despite the continued military attacks and territorial expansions of the Oromo (see Etefa 2012, pp. 22-28 for details), Susenyos would sustain himself and his kingdom with such limited victories. Susenyos would remain on the Abyssinian throne for more years as a friend and an enemy to the Oromo.

Atse Susenyos had two conflicting sides for the Oromo: friendship on one side and hostility on the other. For the former, he selectively embraced frontier Oromo communities in the region that would become the northern sections of the present North Shewa and West Shewa administrative zones of Oromia State as his followers and as his highly trusted and determined elite soldiers. In this regard, he depended on the Oromo to secure the embattled Abyssinian throne for himself and to defend the kingdom from internal and external enemies. For the latter, he selectively attacked the Oromo, who rejected him because he betrayed them and chose to seek the Abyssinian throne. However, they considered him one of them as they had raised him, trained him as an Oromo, and accepted him as their leader. In no time, he had gone out of the way of Gadaa and had become an absolute monarch of the kingdom of Abyssinia that the Oromo had been fighting for many centuries. In his hostility to the rest of the Oromo, except for his followers and niche of supporters, he waged war against the Oromo and tried to divide them and induce conflicts between them. He first tried to destroy it because he knew their unity had always been their strength, and indeed, it would remain a threat to his kingdom.

Atse Susenyos caused the Oromo unrepairable political damage of his time. The true extent of this damage may not be known. Nonetheless, the abrupt suspension of the massive progress of the Oromo offensive-defensive campaign after the tenth Gadaa (1594-1602), followed by his long reign as king of Abyssinia, suggests that his strategies and tactics against the Oromo worked very well. To do the Oromo that severe harm, one might ask, 'What advantages did he have on the Oromo that his predecessors had not?' The answer would be, 'Actually, very much.' They had adopted him as their son: he had become one of them. Furthermore, the frontier communities considered him their Gadaa leader and followed him as such. Nevertheless, he was able to lead them toward his own goal. This included dividing them. He could not have ascended to the Abyssinian throne without dividing them and receiving decisive support.

Atse Susenyos depended on the Oromo warriors and ally communities in many ways and used them tactfully to defend himself and his kingdom. He had a military division that served him as a bodyguard[5] named Darara (*Daraaraa* means '*flowering or flower'* in *Afaan Oromoo*), and he had an army contingent by the name Shanan (*Shanan* means '*the five'* in *Afaan Oromoo*), which was based in Gojjam (Tafla 1987, pp. 903, 965). An area that was the settlement of the latter regiment survives to date under the same name in Gojjam. He also had an

imperial military division by other Oromo names, Galan (*Galaan*) and Qero (*Qeerroo*), who were stationed in Gojjam (Tafla, 1987). Tafla (1987) suggests that the former was recruited probably from the *Galaan* Oromo while the latter was composed of the Oromo class of *Luba* (pp. 916, 959). *Luba* is the sixth Gadaa stage that ideally corresponds to the age set of 40–48, where those who belong to it assume political, social, economic, and ritual power according to the Oromo republican democracy, Gadaa System (Legesse, 1973; 2006). *Qeerroo* is a common Oromo name for bachelors. It refers to the Oromo who belongs to the fourth age-set (24–32). *Qeerroo* is the most energetic and war-ready age-set in the Oromo social stratification of the Gadaa System. Furthermore, he was a decisive ally of the Oromo communities. Some historical records indicate that his ally Oromo warriors were "entirely on horse, a service at which they are very expert" while some of his Abyssinian armies under his viceroys were "consisting only of foot" in the late 1620s (Lobo, 1887 [2007], Part II, Chap VII).

One typical example of the self-sacrifice of some Oromo for the defense and protection of *Atse* Susenyos (and his cause) stands out. It occurred almost immediately after his ascendancy to the Abyssinian throne, betraying the Oromo after he pretended to be their leader according to their Gadaa System. It is a typical illustration of the level of commitment of his Oromo elite soldiers to commit atrocities against their fellow Oromo in his defence. It took place at the time when the "southern Oromo" were united by forming a league (Confederation) to avenge the defeat of the *Marawwaa* Oromo, who had advanced farther north (Bruce, 1791, p. 463). They had an ambitious plan to "invade Abyssinia with united forces, and a complete army to burn and lay waste the whole country between the [River] Tacazze and [Lake] Tzana, and to attack the emperor [the *Atse*] in his capital of Coga" (Bruce, 1791, pp. 463-464). The plan could not be executed fully, at least for the time being, because of the catastrophic defeat of the Oromo in the hands of the elite and the closest army of *Atse* Susenyos, who, at the time, was well known mainly as Oromo. Bruce (1791) narrates the massacre of the Oromo:

> It was on the 7th of January 1608, early in the morning, that the [Oromo] presented themselves to Socinios [Susenyos] in battle in a plain below Ebenaat, surrounded by small hills covered with wood. The [Oromo] filled the whole plain as if voluntarily devoting themselves to destruction.
>
> . . .
>
> Socinios [Susenyos] that day, for what particular reason does not appear, distinguished himself among the midst of the [Oromo], by fighting like a common soldier. … However that maybe, all

> turned to the disadvantage of the [Oromo]. No general or other officer thought himself entitled to spare his person more than the king; all fought like common soldiers; and, being the men best armed and mounted, and most experienced in the field, they contributed in proportion to the slaughter of the day. About 12,000 men on the part of the [Oromo] were killed upon the spot; the very few that remained were destroyed by the peasants, whilst 400 men only fell on the part of the king, so it was a massacre rather than a battle. (pp. 464-465)

Susenyos built his army mainly from Oromo recruits (Tafla, 1987, p. 193). The reason for this may be found in the Oromo military tradition. By then, they had instituted the tradition of strict structure that prepared every able Oromo for combat. Recruits were readily available as they had been trained and ready because of the combat-ready age-set institutions and their regimentations. In addition, the culture of following leaders strictly at the local and central (muummee) levels of the office of *Abbaa Duulaa* and *Abbaa Gadaa* had been firmly instilled. Most importantly, "they go to war and into battle determined and firmly resolved to conquer or die," and Susenyos "recognized this quality in them and most of the Abyssinians the exact opposite (Manoel de Almeda, 1954, quoted in Etefa, 2012, p 32).

In addition to conscripting Oromo *en mass* in his army, Susenyos was astute in using influential Oromo individuals in his administration. He exploited his leading official and friend, an Oromo by the name Bokku (Buko), in administrative and military activities in Begemeder and Lasta while the latter was also serving as governor of Damot (Tafla, 1987, pp. 896–897). This Damot was the new Damot province formed in Gojjam, north of the Blue Nile River, not the old Damot, south of the river that had been taken by the Oromo (Etefa, 2012, p. 27). The two Damots are sometimes referred to as upper and lower Damots in Abyssinian records. Bokku was appointed the governor of Damot in 1627, but by 1629, the Oromo had killed him in battle, as they would *Ras* Se'ele Kristos and Fequre-Egzi, a general charged by the *Ras* to protect Gojjam.

Furthermore, Susenyos garnered the support of his Oromo associate for his cause. Specific *Tuulamaa* Oromo communities helped Susenyos in eliminating his old enemy. They captured and killed *Ras* Zaselassie and sent his decapitated head to him during Susenyos's early years on the Abyssinian throne (Budge, 1928; Tafla, 1987). *Ras* Zaselassie had rebelled against *Atse* Susenyos in Gojjam as he did against *Atse* Zedengle.

Susenyos appears to have rewarded the minority Oromo groups estranged from the rest of the Oromo because of their service and alliance with the enemy. He selectively settled some Oromo communities in Gojjam and Dembia (Baissa, 2004, p. 107) as well as in Damot, Metekel, Agew Medir, and Banja

(Mekuria, 1953 Eth. C., p. 253). Gojjam, Damot, Metekel, Agew Medir, and Banja regions soon came under the control of the Oromo. The settler Oromo communities became the landowners, including two-thirds of the land taken from the churches established by *Atse* Gelawdewos and *Etege* Selus Haila (Mekuria, 1953 Eth. C., p. 253). Susenyos's Oromo soldiers became overlords in Gojjam in the present *Yilmana Densa, Mecha*, and *Bahir Dar Zuriya* districts of West Gojjam Zone of Amhara State. These districts constitute a vast country located immediately to the south and southeast of Lake *Tana*. The first two districts still carry Oromo names. The former is named after the Oromo lineage name – *Ilmaan Dhinsaa* (sons of Dhinsa),[6] and the latter is named after the *Maccaa* Oromo of *Booranaa*. The last district was reduced from the former two for administrative purposes, encompassing Bahir Dar City, the state's capital city. The Oromo of *Maccaa*, *Darraa*, and *Warab* were the predominant inhabitants of the districts around Bahir Dar, both on the left and right sides of the southern mouth of Lake Tana.[7] In Dembia, Susenyos settled the Oromo in the territories presently known as Azzezo and Dembia. He settled the Basso Oromo in southwest Gojjam (Tafla, 1987, p. 893). This Baso Oromo district is presently part of the East Gojjam Zone named Baso Liben (*Baasoo Liiban*).

However, it is also reasonable to assume that *Atse* Susenyos settled the selected Oromo groups in these districts for using them. In the first place, *Atse* Susenyos was able to ascend the Abyssinian throne using the Oromo elite warriors. It would be reasonable to assume that he would settle them closer to him in Gojjam, where his capital was initially. Lapiso G. Delebo (1982 Eth. C. pp. 156–157.) explains: *Atse* Susenyos kept his faithful Oromo warriors for decisive battles throughout his reign and used them effectively against the worst of his enemies. The involvement of elite Oromo warriors in battles was synonymous with his victory during his reign. When a certain Melk'a Kiristos, a warlord and leader of the revolts of the Agaw people who had declared himself as a king and made appointments and removal of authorities, troubled the kingdom by defeating its army repeatedly, *Atse* Susenyos sent an Oromo army who defeated him. Also, when, in May 1632, the Abyssinian army of 20,000 strong under the leadership of the great Abyssinian commander *Ras Bitweded* was defeated by Melk'a Kiristos, *Atse* Susenyos himself marched on him and defeated and killed him on 2 June 1632 using only 8,000 Oromo elite warriors.

In addition to making friends and enemies among the Oromo, Atse Susenyos also made friends and enemies among the Christian Abyssinians by becoming devoted Catholics. Following the example of his brother, Se'ela Kiristos (ስዕለ ክርስቶስ), who had accepted Catholicism through the Jesuit mission to Abyssinia in 1613 and had established a catholic mission in Gojjam (Cohen, 2009, p. 23), Susenyos was officially converted to Roman Catholicism on 1 November 1621 (Fernández, 2013). Se'ela Kiristos, who later inspired Samuel Johnson to write his novel *Rasselas* in 1759, was head of the Catholic Church in

Abyssinia (Fernández, 2013). Susenyos understood the wrath of the established Church and made his public conversion only after hesitating for years. He had kept his decision secret (Cohen, 2009, p. 43). Soon after his conversion, however, Susenyos received communion from the Jesuit father in 1622 (Cohen, 2009, p. 23). These subsequent decisive actions infuriated the established Alexandrian Coptic Church and its devoted clergy and laity in the kingdom. The Coptic Church and its ardent followers became his public enemies, while the early Catholic converts and their sympathizers became his allies and protectors.

During the reign of *Atse* Susenyos, not only the *Atse* but also some of his governors of the kingdom's provinces relied more on the Oromo warriors than on others. This was because the Oromo made good and determined warriors than the Abyssinians. When the governor of Tigre province, Takle Giorgis, revolted against *Atse* Susenyos which was more so against the newly proclaimed state religion, Roman Catholicism, Jerome Lobo (a Jesuit Father) observed that the governor ("Viceroy") "placed all his confidence in the Galles [Oromo], his auxiliaries" (Lobo, 1887 [2007], Part II, Chap IX). Takle Giorgis also had an Oromo by the name Tafa (*Xaafaa*) as the "master of his household," i.e., *Dajazmach* (Bruce, 1791, p. 557). At a critical battle, "of all the troops of Tecla Georgis [Takle Giorgis], only the Galles [Oromo] made any resistance; the rest abandoned him without striking a blow" (Lobo, 1887 [2007], Part II, Chap. IX). The Oromo constituted a large corps of the two army divisions of Takle Giorgis, "*Tcheraguas*" and "*Sultan ba Christos." In* the battle against the army of the Catholic king *Atse* Susenyos led by Keba Christos in 1628, they were the ones who were killed the most in the struggle "to defend the ancient church of Alexandria" against the Roman Catholicism (Bruce, 1791, pp. 556-557). Though he had escaped from the battle, Tekle Giorgis was later captured and hung by the order of *Atse* Susenyos, his father-in-law (Bruce, 1791, pp. 557-559). This was one of the historical battles involving the Oromo for the defence and protection of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Abyssinia, which has long been suppressed in the history of the Church and the Abyssinian historiography.

Atse Susenyos openly converted to Roman Catholicism in March 1622 (Delebo, 1982 Eth. C., p. 152; Etefa, 2012, p. 28) or in November 1621 (Fernández, 2013) and made Roman Catholicism the official religion of his kingdom. His conversion and declaration of Roman Catholicism as a state religion replaced the Egyptian Coptic Christianity that had been the kingdom's official religion starting from the 4th century CE. In effect, Catholic liturgy was introduced, circumcision was banned, the laity re-baptized, and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays was forbidden. He made this sea change in his kingdom noticeably clear four years later:

> On 11 February 1626, Atse Susenyos, his heir Fasiledes, together with his brothers, the Abyssinian Court and Church authorities and officials, the representatives of the local administration, the nobility, the clergy, the abbots, all of them, swore allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church and accepted the Roman Papal authority and doctrine by presenting themselves in prostration in front of Patriarch Afonso Mendez at the conference held at Gorgora Palace. (Delebo, 1982 Eth. C., p. 155) [Translation from Amharic]

The measures that *Atse* Susenyos took after his official conversion in 1621 earned him more robust support from the Jesuits and more and more enemies among his people. The Coptic monks and the devout notable nobles determined to keep the old faith had organised armed resistance against him before he made his conversion official. The Catholic converts had also formed their faction against that of the Copts. The religious civil war had begun. The military victory of the Catholic faction over the faction of Coptic Orthodox monks and notables in 1617 had given the Jesuit missionaries the momentum they needed, and the Castilian Pedro Páez and the Portuguese Luis de Azevedo, António Fernandes, and Manoel de Almeida had arrived in Abyssinia. Most importantly, *Atse* Susenyos had become a devoted Catholic.

In response to the state's favour, the symbolic development efforts of the Jesuits in the kingdom would continue with more focus on stone buildings. By 1622, the Jesuits had already started to build contemporary palaces, churches, and mission residences from stone on the north shore of Lake Tana (Bruce, 1791, p. 495). Stone buildings had been very uncommon in the kingdom. In these building projects, few Indian, Egyptian, and local experts were involved. *Atse* Susenyos also built the Alata stone bridge (the first stone bridge built over the Blue Nile, commonly known as Portuguese Bridge) near the Blue Nile fall, south of Lake Tana, in the 1620s "for which purpose he procured masons from India" (Lobo, 1887 [2007], Part II, Chap. X). The hiring of foreign architects and builders was not new in Abyssinia. Recently, *Atse* Gelawdewos (r. 1540–1559) hired "Syrian and Armenian artists and the skill of Frank and Egyptian" to build himself a palace (Beyene, 2016, p. 206). According to Víctor M. Fernández (2013), *Atse* Susenyos had moved his capital to Gorgora, to Gorgora Nova, in 1614, a place chosen for him by Catholic priests. There, the Jesuits built him a two-story royal residence (castle) in the early 1620s under the leadership of Pedro Páez; the Jesuits also built a Church (in the model of the Jesuit Church of St. Paul in Diu in India) and a residential building of many rooms from stone for themselves at Gorgora Nova. However, in 1618, *Atse* Susenyos changed his residence from Gorgora Nova to Dänqäz, which would remain his capital until 1632. The Jesuits would begin building a two-story royal palace for the *Atse* at Dänqäz around 1628. *Atse* Susenyos liked the vegetation

and the strategic location of Azäzo, 12 km north of Dänqäz. As a celebration of his official acceptance of two perfect natures (divine and human) of Jesus Christ, on 9th November 1621, he laid the foundation stone for the construction of a Catholic Church, Gännätä Iyäsus, at Azäzo. He would also order the construction of a two-story primary royal residence in 1624 next to the Church at Azäzo. The Jesuits would also build a mission residence from stone and lime, a fortified enclosure around the church, an underground water system under the residence, and a pool[8] of 33 x 22 meters with a fountain in the subsequent years at Azäzo. The Jesuits would build a Catholic church in the design of the Latin cross at Dänqäz in 1628. They would also create a mission residence at Däbsan, Enfranz. Däbsan would remain the residence of Patriarch Afonso Medes until 1632. The Jesuits and the *Atse* were committed to converting the people, and the reign of the catholic Atse was a pioneering and exemplary success in downing the catholic mission in Africa.

The official declaration of change of the established religion of the kingdom, however, became the marker of the beginning of the end of the reign of *Atse* Susenyos. The old Church and the clergy became a formidable force against him. Ultimately, they would force him to surrender his power to his son, who would restore the old church as a state church. What would remain of the influence of the Jesuit in the court and the kingdom for centuries to come were the customs and political *modus operandi* of Medieval Europe that they instituted as modernisation of the monarchy and the Christological controversies that they implanted among the Abyssinian ecclesiastics.

Atse Susenyos's situation with the Oromo was no different. Though he was an adopted son of an Oromo, Susenyos became the dividing element and the enemy of the Oromo nation after he took control of the Abyssinian kingdom. He could win the hearts and minds of leaders and commoners of the frontier Oromo communities as his followers. At the same time, most of the Oromo, who had already been at war with the Abyssinian kingdom, opposed him. As an insider man who was no different from being an Oromo, Susenyos could steer controversies and divide the Oromo communities into the adjacent regions. The Oromo neither approved his absolute power nor tolerated his divisive policy towards them. Susenyos must have known that, sooner or later, the Oromo would overwhelm him. This is understandable based on his unyielding efforts to get support from Europe against the Oromo. As he had become the embodiment of the Abyssinian kingdom, Susenyos started to seek military help from King Philipp of Spain and Portugal against the Oromo, evoking earlier collaboration between the two against the common enemy of the Christian faith (Cohen, 2009, p. 44).

At the same time, Susenyos started to unleash violent and tactical attacks. He relentlessly attacked the Oromo militarily along the kingdom's border with the Oromo. At the same time, he also employed gruesome tactics to divide and

weaken the Oromo. In this endeavour, he inflamed the rebellion of *Yaabbata* and *Ilma-gosaa*[9] against the Oromo. According to Oromo oral tradition, "he encouraged the *Maccaa* to steal the Boku [*Bokkuu*] or symbol of Gadaa authority from the Tulama [*Tuulama*] in an attempt to split them" (Baissa, 2004, p. 120 (Note 18)). He also strongly allied with Banaro, the ruler of the then-tributary state of Ennaria, against the *Maccaa* Oromo in the 1610s. Like Susenyos, Banaro also enticed the *Yaabbataa* to his camp when he was actively engaged in war with the *Sadachaa* and the *Afree* of *Maccaa,* where he scored some notable victories (Hassen, 1990, pp. 71-75). Banaro's campaign against the Oromo was in a tactical alliance with the army of Se'ela Christos, the governor of Gojjam, to weaken the *Maccaa* (*Afree* and *Sadachaa* confederations) who had settled between Gojjam and Ennaria from north and south, and in a strategic alliance with the broader objective of *Atse* Susenyos to stop further advances of the Oromo across the Blue Nile. Though he had won the hearts and minds of some Oromo in his early days, starting from before ascending the Abyssinian throne, in the end, Susenyos became an open enemy to them. The exceptions were those Oromo regiments of his army who were at his service and had remained convinced that he was one of them.

On the other hand, paradoxically, after his conversion to Catholicism, *Atse* Susenyos appeared to have gravitated toward Oromo. He abandoned his wives and concubines. He chose an Oromo woman for his faithful married life. According to Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge, the eminent English Egyptologist, Orientalist, and Ethiopianist, "After his conversion [probably in the early 1610s], his one wife was [Oromo] princess, Waled Sa'ala (ወልድ ሠዓለ)" (Budge, 1928, pp. 383–384). She bore him four sons and three daughters whose names were Kenafra Kristos (ከናፍረ ክርስቶስ) Fasiledes (ፋሲለደስ), Claudius (ገላውዴዎስ), Markos (ማርቆስ), *Wangelawit*[10] (ወንጌላዊት), *Malakotawit*[11] (መለኮታዊት), *Galilawit*[12] (ገሊላዊት) respectively (Budge, 1928, pp. 383–384). If the account is correct, this makes *Atse* Susenyos the first Abyssinian *Atse* to bring Oromo blood to the Abyssinian royal line, save the unverified claims by Jiksa (2015).[13]

However, the marriage of *Atse* Susenyos to an Oromo woman appears to have little effect on the Oromo. In the long run, the marriage would make the Oromo part of the aristocratic bloodline of the Gondarine Dynasty. Waled Sa'ala (Empress Siltan Mogesa (ስልጣን ሞገሳ)) would give birth to princes and princesses. However, the Amhara-ethnocentric Abyssinian chroniclers would consciously suppress this bloodline. They have deliberately avoided the mention of the Oromo bloodline in the Gondarine Dynasty before the ascendancy of *Atse* Iyo'as I in the records. The Oromo also had little interest in the marriage and the mix of the Oromo blood with the Abyssinian royal bloodline. This could be because descent in the Oromo society is based purely on paternal ancestry. Nonetheless, these princes (including Fasiledes, the founder of the city of Gondar) and princesses must have carried the Oromo

blood of their mother and passed it to many princes who ascended the Abyssinian throne. In the short run, his marriage to an Oromo woman probably did not earn *Atse* Susenyos any support from the Oromo who disliked him, nor did he stop his relentless attacks on the Oromo.

Around the middle of his reign, Susenyos saw a natural calamity as an opportunity to attack the Oromo. The devastating famine of the early 1620s had affected the Oromo, mostly non-pastoralist peoples, more than any other. The section of the Oromo, who were pastoralists, depended on milk and meat, not storable grains. As a result, the famine was severe among the Oromo, who lost most of their cattle to the drought that preceded it. Susenyos saw this as an opportunity and attacked the Oromo in Angot (*Yajju*) in the east and Agew Meder (Awi Zone) in the southwest. In his 16th year, *Atse* Susenyos marched on the Oromo to recover Yona'el. Yona'el had taken refuge among the Oromo. This led to division among them as the Oromo community, who gave him protection, refused to hand him over (Bruce, 1791, p. 259). Unfortunately, *Arko Negus*, whom Budge mistakenly refers to as "king of the Oromo",[14] later caught and killed Yona'el and sent his decapitated head to Susenyos. This was probably because Yona'el had become more of the cause of the destruction of the Oromo than Arko Negus could bear to protect him. At the same time, one Abyssinian warlord allied himself with the Agew people to attack the Oromo. In collaboration with the Agew, *Ras* Se'ela Kristos, brother of Atse Fasil and governor of Gojjam, attacked the Maccaa Oromo in the southwest of Abyssinia from his fortified centre at Sarka, south of Bahir Dar. The Oromo had forced him to fortify his residence with high stonewalls. The compound was designed to prevent the periodic attacks of the Oromo (Fernández, 2013). The ruins of this seven-meter-high wall and his residence, which probably was built with the support of the Jesuit mission to which he was head, can be seen today at Sharka (see *Figure* 30 in Fernández, 2013). The Agew had agreed to be converted to Christianity if the Oromo were defeated. The Oromo had occupied Matakkal (Machakal), Gonga, Dagar, Hankasha, Chara, Dangla, Kwakuran, Lala, and Abola. The Oromo in the region presently known as Agew Mider threatened the Agew. War was inevitable: The Oromo lost the battle; the Agew became Christians.[15]

In addition to the opportunistic attacks, Susenyos relentlessly continued his battles against the Oromo throughout his reign. Susenyos fought subsequent bitter battles against the Oromo (Budge, 1928, pp. 307–312, 386–388; Tafla, 1987, pp. 307–405). His first attack was in the third year of his reign. He attacked the *Warra Nashaa* of the Arusi (*Arsii*) and other *Baarentuu* Oromo who had controlled Gojjam (Tafla, 1987, p. 307). Next, he attacked the *Liiban* Oromo in southeast Gojjam. The *Liiban* Oromo had controlled Gafat, Cheme, Damot, and Agew. In this battle in Damot, the *Liiban* Oromo had four warrior formations: *Luba*, *Qeerroo*, *Qondaalaa*, and *Ittimakoo*. He was victorious, and

thousands of young Oromo were killed. A few days later, he fought with the *Digaluu* Oromo, who had occupied Zigam and Duri. Then, he attacked the Ana, the *Uru*, and the *Abbaxxii Marawwaa* Oromo[16] in Tigray. The *Marawwaa* Oromo defeated him decisively in the fifth year of his reign at Wuqro. The Oromo devastated Begemeder and Dembia up to Goraba and Chihera and burned Enfraz and Qoga (the royal towns), forcing the *Atse* to flee to Denqez. Nevertheless, after collecting support from Abyssinian regional warlords and his relatives and gathering an army of "earth swarming" and "countless multitudes," Susenyos defeated the *Marawwa*a Oromo at the battle of Teqen River near the crossing of River Tekkeze in the lower Ebennat. In his fourth year, he had battled against the *Booranaa* Oromo and the Oromo at Dorago. Again, in his 13th year, he had another battle with the Oromo at Masalamya. In his fourteenth year, Susenyos sent his army led by *Ras* Se'ela Kiristos, *Dajazmach* Bokku[17] and *Tor–Abegaz* Asgar, which together with *Yahabata* and *Ilmagwizit* "wiped the Chelleha Abbo [Calliyaa Abboo Oromo] from the face of the earth" (Tafla, 1987, pp. 345–347). He did so in support of the rebellion of the vassals of the *Booranaa* Oromo of *Maccaa*, the *Yahabata* (*Yaabbataa*), and *Ilmagwizit* (*Ilmaan gosaa*). However, soon, the Tuulamaa devastated half of Gojjam from Baranta to Debre Werq, which includes Hagere Negesht, Manqorqorya, Anqora, Enshet, Yashut, Zangimma, and the country of Yaqubat, where people called Shame, Chame, Gafa, and Daban Ansal lived. He also attacked the *Walloo*, Jille, *Marawwaa*, and the *Karrayyuu* Oromo, who had occupied from Darra to Lake Tana killing at least 1500 Oromo. With the battles that lasted for three decades, *Atse* Susenyos inflicted "horrendous cost in human and material loss" on the Oromo (Baissa, 2004, p.107).

Contrary to the fact that he depended on the Oromo *Luba* warriors in many ways, according to his chronicle, Susenyos was victorious and triumphant in most of his mentioned marches against the Oromo. His chronicle was written in the tradition of trumping up the Abyssinian kingdom and its *Atses* for the consumption of sanctimonious propaganda of the king and verbal glorification of the kingdom. In some other campaigns, he was defeated regardless of using his elite Oromo soldiers strategically and tactically against their brothers and having appointed a French expert of artillery and weapons, Vermeil, to the position of Commander-in-chief of his forces. Throughout his reign, particularly after his conversion to Catholicism, stopping the massive advances of the Oromo into the kingdom's heartland remained a top priority for the Catholic mission and the *Atse* (Lobo, 1887 [2007], Part II, Chap. XI).

Despite the multiple records in his chronicle that narrate that he won many of his battles with the Oromo, history made it clear that Susenyos lost the war. Perhaps the most crucial victory of *Atse* Susenyos was that he managed to bread differences between the Oromo of *Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa,* between the Oromo and the new ethnographically integrated non-Oromo through *moggaasaa* (i.e., the

Yaabbataa, and *Ilma gosaa*), and among the sub-clans of each of the broad Oromo branches neighbouring the Abyssinian kingdom. Despite the perils caused by *Atse* Susenyos, the *Maccaa, Tuulamaa, Karrayyuu, Ituu, Arsi,* and *Marawwaa* Oromo were able to preserve some level of unity by maintaining "contacts and coordination in war and peace" during his reign (Baissa, 2004. p. 107).

Even though he lost the war, Susenyos must have significantly dented the unity of the Oromo. They had already been affected by the continued decentralisation of their Gadaa government and by forming a strong regional *Caffee*. The formation of separate politico-religious centres by the Maccaa had already resulted in the clash between the two northern Booranaa junior sub-moieties (federations), Maccaa and *Tuulamaa*. Similar clashes over similar socio-political situations might have also materialised among other Oromo junior sub-moieties of *Baarentuu*. The Oromo could not have their unity anymore.

The division that Atse Susenyos introduced was strategic. It was designed to create infighting and benefit the ailing Abyssinian kingdom. This was summed up by the Portuguese Jesuit who visited Abyssinia in the 1620s who commented that had the Oromo had no internal fighting among themselves, "there would not have been an inch of land in the empire [Abyssinian kingdom] of which they were not the masters" (Antonio Fernandez quoted in Mole, 2014, p. 29). The strategy of breading internal division and in-fighting among the Oromo would continue to make the northern Oromo weaker in the subsequent centuries. The successors of *Atse* Susenyos would benefit from this weakness: They could defend the remainder of the kingdom from the Oromo, at least until the mid-18th century.

Atse Fasiledes (r. 1632–1667) and the Oromo

Atse Susenyos abdicated his power to his son, Fasiledes. The new *Atse* restored the old Church, Coptic Christianity, as the State Church. The religious civil war ended abruptly. The Roman Catholic Jesuits were ordered to leave the court and the kingdom. However, his inheritance of the protracted struggle of the Oromo, though at its waning stage, would continue to stay with him.

The very year *Atse* Fasiledes took power from his embattled father, the Oromo were troubling the kingdom. The chronicles of the Abyssinian kingdom have recorded that the Oromo were attacking deep in the centre of the present Tigray state. According to a translation[18] from "the many copies of general chronicle" by Haile (2016), "In that year, about forty thousand [Oromo], whose name is Läbächa, came to the country of Tigray and laid Särawe to waste" (p.

4). The chronicle also records, in the tradition of Abyssinian hyperbole, "the rulers of Ṣəra' and Tämben [=districts in Tigray] surrounded them at the land of Ala and finished them, sparing none" (Haile, 2016, p. 4) [Square bracket in the original].

Starting his reign with such a large-scale attack by the Oromo, *Atse* Fasiledes spent much of his reign fighting with the Oromo. From his reign of 33 years (from 1632–1665), he made war on the Oromo and Agew for ten of them. He campaigned against them during the 5th, 8th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 18th, 21st, 27th, and 30th year of his reign. The *Hookkoo*, the *Walloo*, and the *Warra Hemanuu* Oromo in Gojjam, Begemeder, and Amhara (southern Wollo and eastern Gondar), respectively, were his targets. He organised a massive expedition against the frontier Oromo communities. As part of these expeditions, for instance, *Dajazmach* Mahdere Kirstos and *Ras-bitwadad* Walda Giyorgis (equivalent to modern Chief of Staff and Prime Minister, respectively) led military expeditions against the Oromo in the 1650s in Begemeder, (Tafla, 1987, p. 941). In 1645, he attacked the *Gudurru* Oromo and defeated some communities (Etefa, 2012, p. 29).

The Oromo, however, not only managed to defend their acquired territories but also strengthened their constriction of the kingdom by reinforcing the encirclement from Rayya, Azebo, and Yejju in the east to Agew Meder and Wenbera in the west. They had taken Walaqa, Bizamo, and old Damot in the south. Shewa was cut off; its inhabitants, the remnant Amharans, were confined to barren but easily defendable escarpments. Their attack on the kingdom north of the Blue Nile River and west of Wollo continued in 1649, 1650, and 1662 (Etefa, 2012, p. 29). In the preceding centuries, they had reclaimed more significant parts of the territory lost to the expanding Abyssinian kingdom. By the second half of the 17th century, "Their fatherland, Oromia, had been defended well" (Etefa, 2012, p. 29).

Nevertheless, *Atse* Fasiledes continued using the Oromo, who had favoured his father before him. The Oromo constituted part of his fighting force. These Oromo warriors and the allied Oromo communities that were settled in the territories under the kingdom's control continued to influence the *Atse* and his kingdom. The Oromo in Azzezo and Dembia must have imparted the Oromo culture and tradition before they were overwhelmed and started to be fully integrated into the Abyssinian culture and tradition.

Atse Yohannes I (r. 1667–1682) and the Oromo

The war-peace relationship between the Oromo and the Abyssinian kingdom continued after the death of *Atse* Fasiledes. *Atse* Yohannes I (r. 1667-1682) was forced to lead one expedition after the other against the Oromo but with no different result than *Atse* Fasiledes before him (Etefa, 2012, p. 29). Though already allied frontier Oromo communities were both at peace and in the kingdom's service, the rest of the Oromo continued to consolidate their expansion in Gojjam, Damot, and Begemeder. Following the *Limmuu* and *Amuruu* Oromo early settlers, the Oromo moved north from south of the Blue Nile River to settle Damot, Wambarma, and Zigam, among others, in southern Gojjam (Etefa, 2012, p. 29).

Haile (2016) translated a fascinating account from the chronicle of Atse Yohannes I. A general of *Atse* Yohannes I, Melka Kiristos, attacked the 12 houses of the Oromo who "invaded Begämdər completely", and the kingdom was spared because "God gave [the *Ras*] power and victory by the help of Saint Michael, the Archangel, and the prayer of Abunä Samu'el, the teacher of virtuous deeds until he killed many on that day" (p. 4). This account shows not only the fact that the Oromo "invaded" most of the present Gondar Zones of the Amhara State, the core of the Abyssinian kingdom of the time, but also the fact that the protection of the kingdom was believed to have come from a divine intervention; not from the strength of the army or its leadership. It is typical for the Abyssinians, as it is true for most religious societies, to find an excuse or credit their defeats or victory to superhuman power. Earlier, during the reign of *Atse* Zedengle, the Abyssinians had taken an excuse for their successive defeats in an imaginative association of the so-called sons of *Laaloo* (*Maccaa*, *Tuulamaa*, *Karrayyuu*, and *Walloo*) with the worship of the devil, and hence receiving his support. What was a minor victory for the *Atse* is credited to the prayer and angelical intervention. This suggests that the kingdom did not have the full power to defend itself from the Oromo during the reign of *Atse* Yohannes I.

In addition to the kingdom's hostility toward the Oromo from the outside, few Oromo were highly influential in the kingdom from the inside. Two influential Oromo during the reign of *Atse* Yohannes I were *Blatenoč Geta* Baslyos and Ṣäḥafe Laḥm Tullu. The former was of Oromo and Hadiya descent. According to the records in the history of Iyasu I (1682–1706), he was the "wise erudite who was knowledgeable in dispensing judgment," and "he was from the honoured class and tribe; and from the [Oromo] and Hadiyya [Hadiya] tribes, the son of Bunaya and the son of the sister of Dajazmach Lorens" (Haile, 2016, p. 5). The latter was of Oromo origin. He was well known for his witty wisdom. Haile (2016) affirms that the wisdom of Ṣäḥafe Laḥm Tullu was

recorded even in Amharic in the Abyssinian chronicles: ይሉ ኣይሉ፡ የታለ ቱሉ። "Where is Tullu to clear this confusion?" (p. 5).

Atse Iyasu I (r. 1682–1706) and the Oromo

The approaches of *Atse* Susenyos and *Atse* Iyasu I towards the Oromo in general and towards the Oromo *Luba* warriors of the northern Oromo, in particular, were similar. *Iyasu* (ኢያሱ) had also found refuge among the Oromo, like *Atse* Susenyos before him, before his ascension to the throne, and had made an Oromo one of his favourite courtiers (Pankhurst, 1997, p. 442). After he had become *Atse*, he also employed contingents of Oromo troops. He also settled the *Baasoo* Oromo[19] of *Gudurru* in southwestern Gojjam, and there was a significant army division named Basso in the 17th and 18th centuries[20] (Tafla, 1987, p. 893). A vast district in southern Gojjam carries their name to date.

For the Oromo who were out of his sphere of influence and remained in opposition to the kingdom, *Atse* Iyasu I was no different from his predecessors. He campaigned against frontier groups of Oromo many times: he was defeated more times than he won (Tafla, 1987). During his second year, he campaigned against the *Walloo* Oromo and massacred a considerable number of them. In his seventh year, he massacred the *Booranaa* Oromo in Walaqa, in the present North Shewa Zone of Oromia, northwest of Debra Libanos. In his fourteenth year, he collected tribute from the *Karrayyuu* and the *Abootee* Oromo in Walaqa by the threat of force. In his eighteenth year (1700), he was defeated disastrously and dishonourably by *Gudurru* Oromo, who mainly inhabited the south flank of the Blue Nile in the present northern districts of West Shewa and *Horroo Gudurru* Wallagga Zones of Oromia State. The *Gudurru* destroyed two of his imperial army regiments known as Bursa and Chefenta (Tafla, 1987). He could only defeat the Oromo in *Horroo Gudurru* four years later, in 1704, when he could proceed further south to Enaria (Etefa, 2012).

His defeats by the *Gudurru* forced *Atse* Iyasu I to buy the friendship of the *Gudurru* Oromo leaders. He sought a blood relationship with the Oromo for strategic appeasement. To this effect, he gave his daughter, Walate Sellasie, in marriage to the hero of *Gudurru* Oromo, Tullu, in Damot in the late seventeenth century. *Dajazmach* Tullu became governor of Damot. He demonstrated his friendship to the Oromo who were close to him.

This, however, could not be enough to establish peace between the Oromo and the Atse. The warring relationship between the Oromo and the Abyssinian kingdom continued. Later, Iyasu defeated the *Maccaa* Oromo groups led by *Dajazmach* Tullu and Dilamo. The defeated Oromo group, however, submitted to *Dajazmach* Lata Wale, another Oromo from *Gudurru*, instead of submitting

to Iyasu I. The victory of the *Atse* brought him neither peace nor submission. The Oromo continued to distress the Christian kingdom.

Realising the non-waning threat of the Oromo to his kingdom and the inevitability of their victory, Iyasu I produced a change of policy and strategy. He decided to establish peace with the Oromo communities at the forefront by tactfully denting the unity of the Oromo by entering into a peaceful settlement agreement with some of them. He planned to use the Oromo group, who would strike a peace deal with him against the rest of the Oromo, to check their expansion at the frontiers. To this effect, Iyasu settled the *Baasoo* Oromo at Atsatsamie at the bank of River Abay (Blue Nile) and the *Jaawwii* Oromo at the bank of Damot, north of *Guduruu* Oromo, as a counterforce against the expansion of the *Maccaa* Oromo into the northern plateau of Gojjam, Begemeder and Dembia (Tafla, 1987).

The strategy could not be limited to only checking the Maccaa Oromo expansion. *Baasoo* is the other name of *Bacchoo* according to የመሓዝ የትውልድ ሐረግ (The Genealogy of *Maccaa*), a historical volume authored by an unknown person (Gidada, 2016, Note 67, p. 82). The *Baasoo* Oromo in Gojjam and the *Bacchoo* Oromo of *Tuulamaa* in Southwest Shewa are thus the same people. Based on the same historical document, the "Jawwi" are one of the branches of western *Booranaa* Oromo (Bruce, 1790b, p. 56; 1791, p. 412), or "tribes" of the *Maccaa* Oromo (Gidada, 2016, p. 38). If the record in የመሓዝ የትውልድ ሐረግ is correct, Iyasu settled units of both *Tuulamaa* (*Baasoo*) and *Maccaa* (*Jaawwii*) junior sub-moieties at the southern flanks of the then kingdom of Abyssinia. The purpose was to defend his kingdom from the rest of the *Tuulamaa* and *Maccaa* Oromo.

This strategy seems to have worked well. It appears that the massive expansion of the Oromo to the northwest of the kingdom to the present North Gondar Zone of Amhara State was slowed, at least since then. However, it did not prevent the southern districts of the present East and West Gojjam Zones of the Amhara State from becoming an Oromo country. Gojjam, Agew Meder, Damot, and Wanbara provinces were where the self-driven Oromo settlement seems to have been intensified during the reign of Iyasu I (Etefa, 2012, p. 29). It would only be through a few centuries' long assimilations that the Oromo of Gojjam would become Christians and Amharic language speakers, the typical denominators of Amhara identity. Nonetheless, the *Maccaa* Oromo in Gojjam remained independent: by the end of the 18th century, they elected their Gadaa leaders and obeyed them more than the appointee governors from Gondar, the royal capital of Abyssinian (Bruce, 1790, cited in Baissa, 2004, p. 103).

From Iyasu I to Iyasu II and the Oromo (1682–1755)

From Iyasu I until Iyasu II, the Abyssinian *Atses* ruled for short periods. During the reigns *Atse* Tekle Haimanot I (r. 1706–1708), Na'od II (r. 1708), *Atse* Tewoflos (r. 1708–1711), *Atse* Yostos (r. 1711–1716), *Atse* Dawit III (r. 1716–1721), *Atse* Walda Georgis (r. 1721), *Atse* Bakkafa (r. 1721–1730), and *Atse* Iyasu II (r. 1730–1755) the influence of the Oromo on the increasingly weakening kingdom of Abyssinia only continued to grow. From *Atse* Iyasu I (r. 1682–1706) to *Atse* Iyasu II (r. 1730–1755), for half a century, the northern and northwestern Oromo continued to influence the Abyssinian kingdom in the war–peace relation.

This period was also noted in the Oromo-Amhara social dynamics. Parallel to the growing influence of the Oromo, the integration of the northern Oromo into the Abyssinian cultural identity also continued to grow. As a result, many of the northern Oromo communities of *Yajjuu* and *Walloo* gradually became an integral part of the Abyssinian culture and power struggle. They started to carve political power for themselves. Frontier Oromo communities in the south and southwest flanks of the kingdom adopted aspects of the Abyssinian culture. More Oromo accepted Amharan faith and culture during this half-century.

The rest of the Oromo, the Oromo of present Oromia, however, continued to govern themselves with their Gadaa Democracy and its institutions. They remained in peace while consolidating their regained territories through ethnographic integration and naturalisation of alien minorities who had remained behind and chose to be part of the Oromo nation. Independent Oromo communities in Gojjam, Damot, Wanbara, and Agaw Meder also continued to govern themselves according to *aadaa* and *Gadaa*.

Political Dominance of the Oromo

The northern Oromo group gradually became the masters of the so-called Solomonic kingdom during the Gondarine Dynasty. In addition, "The Oromo of *Maccaa* played an active role in the Gondarine (ca. 1636 to 1855) politics throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Etefa, 2012, p. 22). During the first half of the *Gondarine Period*[21] (roughly from 1632–1750), there was no region in the then Abyssinia (except in coastal Eritrea) where the Oromo were not present (Samre, 2011). By 1700, the ruling dynasties of *Warra Sheekaa* and *Warra Hemanuu* had been founded (Gebre Selassie 1975 cited in Melbaa, 1988, p. 29). By the 1750s, the Oromo had established their political dominance

in the kingdom as rulers of some provinces, as part of the royal army and as a territorial dynasty. The *Walloo* dynasty of *Warra Hemanuu* was formed in the second half of the 18th century (Hassen, 1990, p. 80). By the beginning of the second half of the Gondarine Period (roughly from 1750–1850), the Oromo had been widely distributed in the Abyssinia Proper, had intermingled with the Abyssinians, and had adapted some of Abyssinian culture and identity. The northerly Oromo soon became integral to the Abyssinian monarchy and its political and military masters. This prompted one of the distinguished American historians who studied the history of Abyssinian (as the history of Ethiopia), Harold G. Marcus (1994), to call it "subversion to the Solomonic monarchy" (p. 43).

Marcus (1994) argues that the subversion resulted from Susenyos's decision to incorporate the Oromo leaders into Abyssinia's nobility and use their forces against his feudal enemies. However, *Atse* Susenyos had no other choice. The Oromo had progressively flooded the kingdom. He was dependent on the Oromo for his survival. His bid to get firearms from Catholic Europe, particularly from Portuguese and Spain, even at the cost of becoming Catholic and changing the state religion from Alexandrian Coptic Christianity to Roman Catholicism, did not work well. The support he had obtained was not enough either to defend the kingdom from the advancing Oromo or to force the old church's laity and clergy to change their over-a-millennium-old doctrine almost overnight. The Oromo were overrunning the kingdom. There seemed to be no option left for the Abyssinian monarch. Still, the systematic incorporation of the Oromo in the nobility to avoid a total give up of the state power and succumbing to the looming Oromo hegemony. Defending the kingdom in any other way was untenable. The "subversion" was the option he had to maintain the kingdom as an Abyssinian kingdom. The Oromo allowed that option by becoming an integral part of the monarchy rather than abolishing it.

The result of the "subversion" would, however, be the political dominance of some northerly Oromo groups in the power structure of the Abyssinian kingdom. While the vast majority of the Oromo remained under its Gadaa government in the territories that they had reclaimed from both the Islamic principalities and Sultanate of Adal and the Christian Abyssinian kingdom during the Gadaa–based *offensive-defensive* campaigns (mainly from the 1520s to 1610s), some of the northern Oromo willy-nilly became incorporated in the Christian kingdom and associated themselves with the remainder of the kingdom in their immediate neighbourhoods. These northern Oromo gradually became the region's decisive military and political forces. Based on their past victories and future hopes for integration, peace, and prosperity, they chose to become part of the diminished kingdom of Abyssinia rather than destroy it. From being part of it, they gradually became masters of it.

Observing the realisation of the challenges that the northern Oromo posed to the kingdom of Abyssinia, the decision of *Atse* Susenyos to incorporate the Oromo into the Abyssinian nobility, and the success of the Oromo in being masters of the kingdom, Harold Marcus noted. The Oromo represented both past problems and future hopes of the kingdom, and the monarchy "tied its fate to the social and political integration of the Oromo" that eventually transformed them into "the puppets of the Oromo political leaders whom they legitimised" (Marcus, 1994, p. 43). The Oromo entered the political power struggle of the Gondarine Dynasty during the reign of *Atse* Bakkafa (r. 1721–1730). Subsequently, during the *Era of Princes* (1769-1855), they ruled the kingdom by making enthroning puppet kings.

The Ascendancy of the Oromo to Power

The Oromo joined the Gondar Palace[22] during the reign of *Atse* Bakkafa (1721–1730), also known as Atsme Giorgis (Huntingford, 1955, p. 21). Bakkafa, like Susenyos and Iyasu I before him, had taken refuge among the Oromo and had lived with them (Pankhurst, 1997, p. 442; Huntingford 1955, p. 21; Levine, 2007, p. 57). He had a good relationship with his host, the *Yajjuu* Oromo. He had established many friendly ties with them (Huntingford, 1955, p. 21). He built his surroundings with his Oromo friends when he ascended the Abyssinian throne. Levine (2007) further explains:

> Although the Oromo and Amhara interacted in many ways for generations, the process gathered momentum with the escape of future Emperor Bakaffa from the prison fortress at Wohni, from whence he went to live among the Yejju Oromo of Gojjam. Bakaffa grew up in the Oromo culture and became fluent in Oromiffa. As emperor (1721- 30), he filled the court with his Oromo friends and soldiers and sent Oromo fighters to rule over rebellious Amhara in Begemdir and Gojjam. (p. 57)

During *Atse* Bakkafa's reign, the Oromo secured a strong foothold in the Abyssinian court and started to play an ever-increasing part in the domestic politics of the kingdom (Huntingford, 1955, p. 21). According to Huntingford (1955, p. 21), *Atse* Bakkafa was dominated by his Oromo followers, Oromo army regiments, Oromo guards, and an Oromo master of households. In addition to his Oromo "Master of Household" known as Kucho (Huntingford, 1955, p. 21), Bakkafa had an important Oromo advisor, Waragna (*waraana*[23]), who played a "major role" in the affairs of the kingdom (Pankhurst, 1997, p.

442; Budge, 1928; Tafla, 1987). Moreover, Bakkafa had married Mentewab, an "Oromo from Kwara (Chilga)" (Marcus, 1994, p. 47). The marriage was essential to keep the Oromo, on whom the survival of his kingdom depended, in good friendship. The *Jaawwii*, one of the Oromo army regiments, who settled around Azzezo, were also involved in internal politics (Tafla, 1987, p. 919).

After the death of *Atse* Bakkafa, the dominance of the Oromo continued. The increasing involvement of the Oromo in the kingdom's internal affairs and the Atse court would continue through the regency of *Etege* Mentewab. His wife, *Etege Mentewab,* was made, extraordinarily, co-ruler as Queen Regent with her young son and successor, *Atse* Iyasu II. During her regency, the Queen Regent would exercise unprecedented power in the court and throughout the kingdom. She first filled the palace with her assimilated Oromo relatives from Quara. Then, she appointed her brother Wolde Leul as *Ras* of the kingdom. Next, she installed her Quaran relations in high command in the palace and the army. To consolidate the support of Oromo in political intrigue, she married her son, *Atse* Iyasu II (r. 1730–1755), to a daughter of a paramount chief of *Walloo* Oromo, Amito (Levine, 2007, p. 57). Accordingly, *Atse* Bakaffa's successor, his young son, *Atse* Iyasu II, was married to an Oromo princess. *Besides, Etege* Mentewab gave her daughter, *Walata Israel*, in marriage to an Oromo from Gojjam, Yesedeq (Tafla, 1987, p. 427). The talented *Etege* Mentewab, an assimilated Oromo, would soon find herself dominating the monarchy and the politics of the Abyssinian kingdom for over forty years: as *Etege* (1722–1730), as Queen Regent and crowned co-ruler of *Atse* Iyasu II (1730–1755), and as Queen grandmother of *Atse* Iyoas I (1755–1769). Also, the new *Etege Wubit* (also known as *Welete Bersabe*) had come to the Gondar palace with many Oromo followers. Soon, not only *did Afaan Oromoo start to be spoken in the Abyssinian court, but* the number and the power of the Oromo in Gondar palace and its surroundings started to grow exponentially.

The Oromo joined the royal bloodline of the Gondarine dynasty in the mid-18th century. Wubit, the Oromo wife of *Atse* Iyasu II, gave birth to the prince who would become *Atse* Iyoas I. *Atse* Iyoas I (r. 1755–1769) succeeded *Atse* Iyasu II. A publicly acknowledged half-Oromo monarch was now on the Abyssinian "Solomonic" throne. *Atse* Iyoas I, as *Atse* Iyasu II before him, clearly favoured the Oromo and spoke *Afaan Oromoo* in court. He surrounded himself with Oromo officials and filled the Gondar palace with Oromo. Increased Oromo arrived in the royal capital, Gondar city. This became the beginning of the Oromo hegemony in the Abyssinian kingdom. It would continue for almost a century. The northern Oromo would rule the kingdom, installing puppet *Atses* on the throne for nearly a century. This period of the Oromo rule of the kingdom would be known traditionally as *Zamane Masafent* (1776–1855). Gondar became the first permanent residence of the Abyssinian sovereign in the first half of the 17th century.

Following the ascendency of the Oromo to the Abyssinian throne and the critical turn of events in the kingdom court, the Oromo language became an exclusive language of the Gondar palace, and Gondar City became an Oromo town. During the 25 years of the reign of *Atse* Iyasu II and the 14 years of the reign of *Atse* Iyoas I, the Abyssinian capital was effectively an Oromo town, and the Oromo language (*Afaan Oromoo*) was the only language spoken in the palace. The *Atse* Iyoas I and his Oromo officials and kin made *Afaan Oromoo* (Oromo language) the preferred court language. *Afaan Oromoo*[24] became "the only language spoken in the palace" (Budge, 1928, p. 461). The Oromo, perhaps due to their number, also threatened the ethnic balance of the city of Gondar, which "with all intents and purposes" had become an Oromo town (Budge, 1928, p. 461). As much as Finfinnee city (Addis Ababa) is in the heart of Oromia, it has mainly become an Amharan city, speaking mostly Amharic, and the parliament speaks only Amharic. Gondar city in the heart of the Abyssinian kingdom in the 18th century was essentially an Oromo city, its palace speaking only *Afaan Oromoo*. This was achieved because of the coming to power of *Atses* of Oromo descent and because of more and more Oromo taking leadership positions in the army and the civil administration of the minimised kingdom. The Amhara and the Oromo cultures and languages started to flourish competitively in the city. The city continued to be filled by the Oromo. This was because of many factors. First, Oromo relatives of the *Atse* filled the palace enclosure. Second, hundreds of Oromo bodyguards and attendants to the *Atse*s were in the city. Third, the elite Oromo warriors in the royal army were settled around the city. Fourth, the families and relatives of these Oromo moved to the city to serve the kingdom.

Budge (1928) explains how Gondar had become an Oromo town:

> When the minority of Joas [Iyoas] ended, [The Oromo] sent a body of about 1200 horsemen to Gondar as a gift to the king, and with this came a number of [Oromo] nobles, who were formed into a small army of infantry about 600 strong, under the capacity of [Oromo] chief Wosheka. The king summoned two of his uncles to Gondar, Brulhe and Lubo, and they came accompanied by 1000 horsemen. Thus, there was in Gondar [Oromo] army of about 3000 men, to say nothing of their kinsfolk and friends who had followed them there. *The only language spoken in the palace was [Afaan Oromoo], and to all intents and purposes, the capital had become [Oromo] town* [Emphasis added]. (p. 461)

Beyond the reign of her son, *Atse* Iyasu II, when Mentewab was co-crowned, the old *Etege* continued to exercise the power of the state during the reign of her grandson, *Atse* Iyoas I, despite the challenge from his mother. The mother of *Atse* Iyoas I, *Etege* Wubit, fiercely opposed Mentewab's excessive

power and influence from the very beginning. When *Atse* Iyasu II, who used to favour the Yajjuu Oromo, the relatives of his wife, died in 1755, and her son (half Oromo) took the throne, the influence of *Etege* Mentewab started to decline. The exceedingly talented *Etege*, however, tried to maintain her influence. Wubit, on the other hand, firmly asserted that she, the mother, not the grandmother of the *Atse* in power, must preside at his court and have as much influence as Mentewab had on her son, *Atse* Iyasu II. Nevertheless, the impact of *Etege* Mentewab continued largely because of her experience in state affairs as a co-ruler and because of her tested wisdom in handling people in power.

In addition, the kingdom had fallen out of the power of the Abyssinian *Atses* stationed at Gondar. Budge (1928) asserts this fact: "[The Oromo] were not slow to see the opportunity which presented itself to them, and they intrigued and formed a government of their own with the king as their head" (p. 461). These included the Oromo chiefs of *Yajjuu*, *Walloo*, and Gojjam. These local provincial governors, known as Masafent, grew so powerful and started overriding the imperial decrees and orders. They became self-declared autonomous governors.

Meanwhile, the confrontation and power struggle in the Gondar palace between the two *Eteges*[25] continued to grow until the two were in a full-blown conflict, and a civil war would erupt. As the hostility between the two grew, both summoned their relatives and their forces from *Yajjuu* and Quara [k'ʊwaːraː] to Gondar for support and a show of force. The internal power struggle between the two most influential women of the palace and their respective powerful chiefs from two sides of the capital made the prospect of civil war inevitable. In 1766, a civil war broke out "between assimilated (Quaran) and non-assimilated Oromo (*Yajjuu*)" (Marcus, 1994, p. 47). This began the so-called Era of the Princes (*Zamane Masafent*), a.k .a. *Yejjuu* Dynasty.

The distressed old *Etege* invited the governor of Tigre province to neutralise the power struggle between the Quarans and the *Yajjuu*. With the decline of the power of the *Atse* due to resentment and the civil war on one hand and fierce political friction between the Quara and the *Yajjuu* Oromo factions on the other hand, *Etege* Mentewab of Quara invited the powerful governor of Tigre, *Dajazmach* Michael Sehul[26] to Gondar for the rescue. He would soon be appointed *Ras*. He had remained neutral to the Quaran and Yajjuu scuffle. He wanted neither to take state power in his new authority as Ras of the kingdom.

Ras Michael, in general, would do nothing helpful for the *Yajjuu* Oromo who dominated the palace and the kingdom. He had always hated the Oromo, as the celebrated British Egyptologist and Orientalist Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge recorded. According to Budge (1928), Ras Michael was "a shrewd and very capable intriguer" and "a master-hand at bribery," and "he hated the [Oromo] and had always done so" (pp. 457– 458, 467). James

Bruce, the Scottish explorer who had befriended *Ras* Michael during his time in Abyssinia for the claimed reason of discovering the source of the Nile, had witnessed that bribery and corruption were the favourites of *Ras* Michael: no one liked him (Bruce, 1790b, pp. 128, 252). As a hated person, he was of love but feared for his cruelty and intrigues; he too might have loved no one, even among his fellow compatriots. His hatred towards the Oromo was reflected in how he treated some of his Oromo captives. He ordered taking out of the eyes of twelve Oromo chiefs (whom he had taken prisoners in Gondar) and forty-four Oromo soldiers after the battle of Fagitta (Bruce, 1790b, pp. 219, 55) and about twenty that he had captured from Fasil, an Oromo chief and warrior, at the bank of Tekezie River (Seyoum, 2015, p. 194). In addition, he had ordered the skinning of an Oromo captive called Cawwaaqaa Live (Syoum, 2015, p. 194).

With the wicked interplay of animosity and friendship, cruelty and justice, and provocation and mediation, *Ras* Michael managed not only to divide and destroy first the power of the Quaran and then that of the *Yajjuu* but also to remain the master of the kingdom until the *Yajjuu* Oromo revived and took control of the kingdom. *Ras* Michael exploited the opportunity of the civil war between the Quaran and the Yajjuu for himself (Marcus, 1994). With the support of a Christian faction on the nature of Christ known as *Unctionists* that opposed *Atse* Iyoas I because he supported the Unionists, *Ras* Michael defeated and assassinated his master, *Atse* Iyoas I, in January 1769. After the assassination of the Atse, *Ras* Michael made himself a "kingmaker" until he was finally defeated by *Dajazmach* Wand Bewesan, chief of Lasta, at the battle of Sarba Kusa (*Sarbaa Kuusaa*) in 1771. He had fought several battles with Fasil and Woodage Asahel, two of the most prominent Oromo who gave him several battles in Damot, Gojjam, and Agaw Meder (Bruce, 1790b) before his defeat. At the Battle of *Sarbaa Kuusaa,* where James Bruce was present, the Oromo "constantly received new reinforcements" that forced *Ras* Michael to flee back to Gondar, where he was encircled and reduced to the state of a prisoner (Russell, 1985, p. 175). This defeat of *Ras* Michael marked the re-ascendancy of the Oromo to the Abyssinian political power in the capital.

Though they had all the power to do so, the Oromo chiefs refrained from enthroning themselves on the Abyssinian throne. Instead, they started to dictate their wills to the puppet monarchs whom they enthroned and dethroned as they wished. The "Solomonic" dynasty became an apparent Oromo Dynasty. Starting from the coronation of Iyoas I as "king of kings" of Abyssinia in 1755 through the ascendency of *Ras Gugsa*[27] the Great up to the crowning of *Atse* Tewodros II in 1855, except the intervention by *Ras* Michael Sehul, the Oromo wielded the political power of Abyssinian kingdom for one hundred years (Tafla, 1987, p. 47).

The Oromo Rule of the Kingdom of Abyssinia

The supremacy of the "unassimilated" Oromo in the Abyssinian kingdom had begun when, in 1753, the widowed queen from *Walloo* Oromo, *Etege* Wubit, continued. Wubit started to rule in the name of her young son, Iyoas (Joas) I (Jones & Monroe, 1935, p. 122). An Oromo chief, *Atse* Bakaffa's faithful minister, *Waragna* (whom James Bruce calls "Old Fasil" or "Kasmati Waragna" (Bruce, 1790b, p. 534)), was already governor of Damot. He, indeed, was more than just a governor of a province: He led an expedition to Sennar (Sudan) together with *Atse* Iyasu II (Pankhurst, 1997, p. 370). His son, Fasil,[28] succeeded Waragna. Fasil was one of the provincial governors of the Abyssinian kingdom during the reign of *Atse* Iyoas I. However, the queen regent nominated her brother, Eshete, as *Ras* of Gondar in place of the deceased *Ras* Welde Nul. *Hubna Fasil* (the captain of *Jaawwii* Oromo[29]) killed Eshete at Fagitta and proclaimed Fasil king of Damot and the Agew (Budge, 1928, p. 463). The king later sanctioned Fasil's appointment as *Ras* of Damot.

The two brothers of *Wubit,* uncles of *Atse* Iyoas II, *Lubo and Brulhe,* were appointed governors of Amhara and Begemeder, respectively, but only to the effect of causing widespread resentment among the predominantly Amhara population, resulting in the quick removal of the former (Jones & Monroe, 1935, p. 122). *Ras* Michael Sehul deposed Lubo (Budge, 1928, p. 465). The reason for the removal was to appease the uproar of the old Abyssinian nobility for fear of total handing over of their country to the Oromo, "their hereditary and amicable enemies" (Budge, 1928, p. 463). *Dajazmach* Lubo governed Amhara and commanded the *Ilmaan Dhinsaa* and the *Maccaa* (Tafla, 1987, p. 938). *Ilmaan Dhinsaa* and the *Maccaa* were the Oromo army regiments. Brulhe attacked the serving governor of Begemeder, Maryam Barea, for resisting his appointment and was killed[30] in that action (Jones & Monroe, 1935, p. 122).

The power of the *Walloo* Oromo reached its pick when the aged *Etege* Mentewab gave up to the dominance of the *Yajjuu* Oromo in the imperial palace after the civil war between the faction of *Etege* Mentewab (assimilated Quaran Oromo) and the faction of *Etege* Wubit (unassimilated *Yajjuu* Oromo). The *Yajjuu* Oromo faction had emerged victorious and powerful. It would continue to dictate both the making and the duty of the imperial kings to ascend the Abyssinian throne in Gondar after the civil strife. The *Yajjuu* Oromo remained influential in the Gondar Palace[31] both as the royal family and as setters of the puppet–*Atses* on the throne of the kingdom starting from the reign of *Atse* Iyasu II with the interruption of the intrigues of *Ras* Michael. After the 1770s, they controlled the palace from within by being *Atses* of half-Oromo descent and by making kings (puppet–kings) from Debre Tabor (the stronghold and capital of Ali of *Yajjuu* Oromo) from without). In addition to Yejju province (Angot), the

Oromo controlled the most powerful province of the kingdom, Begemeder, about 10 800 square miles, except for a few villages during the 1760s and 1770s (Bruce, 1790b, p. 254). Ali and his descendants dominated the Abyssinian kingdom from the 1780s to the 1850s (Crummey, 2005, p. 503).

Though the anti-Oromo front revived in the 1810s, *Ras* Gugsa Marsa,[32] son of Guangul (the chief ("king") of *Yajjuu* Oromo of *Baarentuu* (Bruce, 1790b, pp. 265, 279)) broke it in 1817. He succeeded by the supremacy of armed forces on the one hand and by arranging a matrimonial alliance with *Dajazmach* Haile Mariam Gebre, the ruler of Simen province, on the other hand. Gugsa had deposed *Atse* Yonas (r. 1797–1798) in January 1798 (Budge, 1928, p. 479) and controlled the political power of the Abyssinian kingdom, placing several puppet *Atses* on the "Solomonic" throne in Gondar. His military power played a significant role in his ascendency to the pinnacle of power. He had organised elite Oromo cavalry and infantry. After consolidating most of the power, Gugsa sought stability and resorted to the Abyssinian tradition of "buying peace" through marriage. Gugsa gave his daughter, Hirut, in marriage to the son of Haile Mariam, Dajazmach Betul (Tafla, 1987, p. 945). Their son, Merso[33], would govern some districts in *Yajjuu*, Simen, and southern Tigray during the rule of his uncle, *Dajazmach* Wube, and their daughter, Taytu (Taitu) would become Etege in 1889 because she had married King Menelik since 1883. His other daughters, Tiringo and Walata Takle, were married to Wag Seyum Kenfu and *Dajazmach* Maru of Dembia, respectively. Gugsa also married his sister, Walata Iyesus, to one of the puppets *Atse* that he installed, Egwale Tsiyon (r. 1801–1818), who had five children with her (Budge, 1928, p. 480).

In arranging such marriage, in addition to his military might composed of over 90,000 men (Budge, 1928, p. 480), *Ras* Gugsa, until his death in May 1825 and his kin successors until 1853, remained "the masters of the Gonderine monarchy" (Marcus, 1994, p. 53). They deposed and enthroned shadow *Atses* as they wished. This historical fact is well captured by the words of Budge, who wrote, "The kings [*Atses*] who reigned from 1800 to 1855 were kings in name only; they had neither influence nor power … Though king succeeded king the monarchy had ceased to exist" (Budge, 1928, pp. 483–484). During this time, the Abyssinian monarchy was effectively an Oromo dictated monarchy or simply an Oromo regency of kings.

During the period of no real Abyssinian central political power, the Oromo chiefs held the real power of the kingdom, making the *Atse* their puppet (Jalata, 2005, p. 53). In 1777, the *Warra Sheekaa* Dynasty, another Oromo power base, was founded (Tafla, 1987, p. 922). The same year, Kenfu Addam, an Oromo chief of *Maccaa* near Lake Tana, who had killed *Ras* Fasil and had been promoted to *Dajazmach* by *Atse* Tekle Haimanot II, installed *Atse* Solomon on the Abyssinian throne in Gondar only to rebel against him two years later and take him at the battle of Sabisa Ber (Tafla, 1987, p. 934). Soon enough, however,

in 1779, Kenfu himself became a captive of *Dajazmach* Beqetu. *Atse* Tekle Giorgis I was installed on the Abyssinian throne in 1779. He had good support from the Tigre and the Gojjam chiefs (Tafla, 1987, p. 435). Relying on such support, he attempted an expedition against Shewa, but the offensive attack by the Walloo Baarentuu and Marawwaa Oromo turned back. *Ras* Ali the Great also defeated *Atse* Tekle Giorgis (r. 1779–1784) and *Dajazmach* Welde Gebr'el of Tigre in 1784 (Tafla, 1987, p. 437).

This victory of *Ras* Ali marked the beginning of the absolute control of the Abyssinian kingdom by the Oromo. Atsme Giorgis, writing the history of the Oromo in the early 20th century, asserts, "From then [1784] on until present-day Ethiopia [Abyssinia] became the kingdom of [The Oromo]" (Tafla, 1987, p. 435). Atsme Giorgis was referring to (a) the Oromo rule of the Abyssinian kingdom from *Ras Ali the Great* until *Ras Ali II* for seventy years (1784–1855), (b) the continued resistance of the northern Oromo to the rule of *Atse* Tewodros II and *Atse Yohannes* IV, and (c) the continued influence of the Oromo warlords in the early years of *Atse* Menelik II. The consolidation of power by *Atse* Menelik II in the 1880s effectively ended the dominance of the Oromo in the Abyssinian kingdom except in Wallo, where *Ras* Michael Ali, an Oromo, remained very influential.

Immediately after defeating *Atse* Tekle Giorgis I in 1784 and constraining him to retire to the monastery of Waldebba, Ali the Great of the *Yajjuu* Oromo Dynasty he assumed the power without crowning himself (Tafla, 1987, p. 878). He installed a shadow *Atse* named Hezqeyas on the throne in Gondar. When Ali died in 1788, Tekle Giorgis I was reinstalled. However, he was deposed a year later in 1789. *Ali Gaz*, the brother of Ali the Great, ruled Abyssinia for five years. After him, two brothers from Lasta, Ras Asrat (paternal cousin of Walda Gabr'el according to Tafla) and Ras Welde Gebr'el, continued to rule for seven years. During these years, the deposition and reinstallation of Tekle Giorgis I, the shadow *Atse*, continued[34]. He was reinstalled four more times: 1794–1795, 1795–1796, 1797–1799, and in 1800 until he died in 1817. He was the puppet played with the most by the power behind the "shadow kings," who enthroned and deposed him six times (Mekuria, 1982 Eth. C., p. 19).

According to Atsme Giorgis, after seven years of joint rule of Abyssinia, *Ras* Asrat and *Ras* Welde Gebr'el entered the conflict. Fighting broke out. *Ras* Welde Gebr'el was exiled to *Warra Hemanuu* when Amde was the governor of Maqdala. Maqdala formed an advanced outpost in the country of *Walloo* Oromo (Reclus, 1892, p. 169). The latter ordered Gugsa and Alula to aid *Ras* Welde Gebr'el. *Ras* Wlada Gebr'el conferred the title of *Dajazmach* to Gugsa and appointed him governor of Fogera, east of Lake Tana. *Ras* Welde Gebr'el forcefully marched from *Warra Hemanuu* and camped at Wagara. *Ras* Asrat, supported by Ras Mared of Gojjam and Ras Gabre of Simen, fought with *Ras* Welde Gebr'el in Wagara. Only *Ras* Gebre escaped, fleeing for his life; the

victory went to the camp of *Ras* Welde Gabr'el. However, his son declined to take power. This allowed young Gugsa and Alula to take state power.

Atsme Giorgis further recounts the question and answer between Gugsa and Alula and the decree that followed when Alula told Gugsa to take the throne of Abyssinia (Tafla, 1987). Gugsa asked: "Who shall we say gave it to us?" Alula replied, "Let us say that Rabbi gave it to us." *Rabbi* is the name that the Oromo use interchangeably with *Waaqa* – the universal Divinity they believe and worship as the creator of everything. Alula issued a decree: "The dead are we[35], the livings are we; any man who does not pay allegiance to Gugsa shall suffer castration, and any woman shall have her breasts cut off" (Tafla, 1987, p. 439). Gugsa, the chief of the *Yajjuu* Oromo of *Warra Hemanu*, became *Ras* of the kingdom of Abyssinia around 1802. He ruled Begemeder, Simen, Gojjam, Lasta, *Yajjuu*, and *Walloo* from Dabra–Tabor, his capital, without crowning himself *Atse* though he could, for over a quarter of a century (27 years) (Tafla, 1987, p. 925).

Ras Gugsa's kin successors ruled the kingdom for a further quarter of a century through the chain of successions. In 1825, *Ras* Yemam, one of the sons of Gugsa the Great, succeeded his father. *Ras* Mareye succeeded his brother, *Ras* Yemam, in 1828. The Tigre (Tigrie people of Tigre country) resisted the rule of the Oromo, equating it to the "loss of one's religion", and voluntarily submitted themselves to the appointee of Agame, Saba Gadis, whom Ras Mareye defeated and took captive at the battle of *May Eslamay*. In 1831, following the assassination of *Ras* Mareye by the son of Saba Gadis, an imposter as an Oromo as if about to present a trophy, another son of Gugsa the Great, Dori, succeeded his brother, *Ras Mareye*. However, *Ras* Dori died in a few months. *Ras* Ali II, the son of *Ras* Alula[36] Gugsa of *Yajjuu* and Wayzero (later *Etege* after she married *Atse* Yohannes III) Manan Liben Amede of *Walloo*, succeeded his uncle *Ras* Dori in 1831. He was the one who installed yet another "shadow king," Yohannes III (r. 1840–1841, 1845, 1850–1851) in 1840. Yohannes III dies in 1868.

Ras Ali[37] II ruled Abyssinia for twenty-two years by enthroning shadow *Atses*. He gave his mother, Menen, to *Atse* Yohannes III, a shadow *Atse*, as a wife. His mother became the *Etege* of the Abyssinian kingdom. Ali also gave his daughter, Tawabech Ali (1831–1858), to *Dajazmach* Kasa of Qwara, the future *Atse* Thewodros II, after much disagreement with her mother (Budge, 1928, pp. 487–488) and ordered him to govern under his mother, *Etege* Menen Liben Amade. *Etege* Menen, the daughter of *Liben Amade Kolase* of *Walloo*, in addition to playing an active role in the rule of her son, *Ras* Ali II, commanded an army of her own, which she led against *Dajazmach* Kasa (Tafla, 1987, p. 943).

According to Budge (1928), the beautiful young Tewabech was given to Kasa despite her mother's characterisation of him being "a low-born savage from the pagan country of the Kawara [Qwara]" in exchange for *Etege* Menen

whom the latter had made prisoner after occupying Gondar. After his marriage to Tawabech[38], Kasa became *Dajazmach* of Dembia in 1847, heir and successor of *Ras* Ali II. *Dajazmach* Kasa, however, rebelled together with his wife. After the death of his wife in 1851, Kasa defeated the army of *Ras* Ali II (his father-in-law) in 1853. *Ras* Ali II fled to Darra, then to Shewa, and then to Yajjuu, where he died in 1866 (Tafla, 1987, p. 878).

In the meantime, Amade Kolase, the son of *Abba Jebo Liban*, became the ruler of Warra Hemanuu and Yajjuu from 1815 to 1839 (Tafla, 1987, p. 879). He was succeeded by Yemam Liben (*Abbaa Jiruu*) at age fifteen or younger, and he died fighting against *Atse* Tewodros II in 1855 (Tafla, 1987, p. 938). He was the father of *Ali Abbaa Bulaa* of the *Warra Hemanuu,* who was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Ali, who would later become *Ras* Michael in 1878 after adhering to Christianity (Tafla, 1987, p. 940). *Ras* Michel became Christian, abandoning Islam under the threat of force from the Christian *Atse* Yohannes IV. *Ras* Michael (Mohammad Ali) married the daughter of *Atse* Menelik II, Princess Shewareged. Shewareged was born to Menelik II and Princess Desta of the *Walloo* Oromo. Shewareged gave birth to Kifle Yaqub, *Lij* Iyasu. *Lij* Iyasu was designated heir to the "Solomonic" throne by *Atse* Menelik II. *Ras* Michael was later crowned king of Wollo and Tigre by his son, *Lij* Iyasu, in 1913 after the death of *Atse* Menelik II.

In such a way, the Oromo of *Walloo* kept enthroning puppet *Atses* on the Abyssinian throne at Gondar and ruled the kingdom from behind the curtain. They installed puppet *Atses* several times. To mention some, in February 1784, *Ras* Ali the Great enthroned the first "shadow king", Iyasu III (r. 1784–1788) (grandson of Iyasu I) by the throne name Ba'al Seged (Tafla, 1987, p. 931). In 1818, *Ras* Gugsa the Great installed a "shadow king", Iyoas II (r. 1818–1821), on the Abyssinian throne. In June 1830, the *Yajjuu* ruling family enthroned yet another "shadow king," Iyasu IV (r. 1830–1832) (Tafla, 1987, p. 931). They chose to install puppet *Atses* instead of crowning themselves *Atses* out of the reverence they had for the legend of the Solomonic bloodline of the Abyssinian monarchs, as has been asserted by the Church. Nonetheless, by installing shadow kings (Puppet *Atses*) on the Abyssinian throne in Gondar, the northern Oromo, mostly *Yajjuu*, effectively ruled the kingdom of Abyssinia except for some parts of Tigray and northern Shewa. To its most significant extent, the then kingdom of Abyssinia included the provinces of Tigre, Gojjam, Wollo, Amara[39], Lasta, and Begemeder. These provinces constitute presently the Amhara and Tigray States of the Ethiopian Federation.

In effect, *Zamane Masafent* was the period of the *Yajjuu* Oromo Dynasty in the Abyssinian kingdom (Seyoum, 2016, p. 207). Throughout *Zamane Masafent* (1769–1855), historian Harold G. Marcus notes, "the real actors were the mayors of the palace, often Oromo, who took their place in the Abyssinian power structure … represented in the person of the *Atse*" (Marcus, 1994, p. 48).

Similarly, historian Tekletsadek Mekuria asserts that the real central power of the Abyssinian kingdom was in the hands of the *Yajjuu* Oromo of the Warra Sheik (*Warra Sheekaa*) dynasty during *Zamane Masafent* (Mekuria, 1982 Eth. C., p. 19). The powerful northern Oromo aristocracy "ruled Gondar for nearly eighty years" (Mole, 2014, p. 27). The power of the Oromo in Gondar lasted until *Atse* Tewodros II finally drove the descendants of Iyoas out of Gondar after 1855 (Budge, 1928, p. 463).

Nonetheless, the northern Oromo, though defeated and driven out of Gondar, did not submit until the death of *Atse* Tewodros in 1868 (Tafla, 1987, p. 457) and until after the 1880s consolidation of power by *Atse* Menelik II. Even after that, the *Walloo* Oromo ruled *Walloo* and Tigray through their king Michael (Mohammad Ali), the father of *Lij* Iyasu, until *Atse* Haile Selassie I ascended the imperial power in the intrigue against the uncrowned[40] *Lij* Iyasu (*Atse* Menelik II's heir to the throne) and the latter was deposed. The *Walloo* Oromo remained in rebellion against the rule of *Atse* Haile Selassie I after the death of Mohammad Ali (*Ras*, later King Michael) in 1918, most notably in 1929, 1943, 1948, and 1970.

A remark made by Atsme Giorgis in the early 20th century, though it manifests the Abyssinian attitude of the time, recapitulates the impact of the rule of the Oromo over the Abyssinian kingdom, which by then encompassed the combination of most of the present Amhara and Tigray states and the State of Eritrea. He states:

> When [Oromo] held power over Ethiopia [Abyssinia], all the people became like the [Oromo]. The [Oromo], however, became more learned in Amarenga [Amharic] than the Amara; they intermingled in marriage, in possession of land and the army. Nowadays, the pure Amara constitute not even one-fifth [of the population]. [The Oromo] decimated and drove out the Amhara and took over Ethiopia, with the exception of Tigre. (Tafla, 1987, p. 441)

The exception of Atsme Giorgis is not a region free of the Oromo. He was echoing an earlier statement of Bahrey where he stated that the Oromo overrun all the provinces of his kingdom except Tigre (Tafla, 1987, p. 165). This 'Tigre' must not have included the southern Tigray of the present time, where the *Rayyaa* and *Azzabo* Oromo have inhabited, at least since the mid-16th century or before the emergence of the Kingdom of Aksum.

Summary and Conclusion

By the 1560s, the Oromo had retaken a third of the Abyssinian kingdom (Bechhaus-Grest, 2005, p. 1182). The kingdom included more than the present Amhara and Tigray States at the time. Two decades later, in the 1580s, they attacked all the Abyssinian provinces except Tigre (Tafla, 1987, p. 165). By the beginning of the 17th century, the Oromo had controlled about two-thirds of Ethiopia. At the time, most of the Oromo communities remained in the regions that would become Oromia State. These Oromo communities would remain in a mutually defensive *status quo* with the kingdom but continued to govern themselves according to their republican Gadaa System during the two following centuries.

Some Oromo groups from among northern *Booranaa* (*Maccaa* and *Tuulamaa*) and northern *Baarentuu* (*Walloo*, *Yajjuu*, *Raayyaa*, *Asaboo*, *Ashangee*, *Waajjiraat*), however, decided to join the kingdom under the leadership of *Atse* Susenyos (r. 1607–1632). Susenyos was an adopted Oromo who first appeared to have the intention to unite the Oromo and the Abyssinians but succeeded only in dividing the Oromo by winning some Oromo communities to his camp. Consequently, these Oromo communities who decided to follow him became politically integrated with the Christian kingdom. The rest of the Oromo estranged them because of their alliance with the enemy. Nevertheless, because of being Oromo, they always had the backing and support of the rest of the Oromo from the south when threatened.

Even though the state power would remain in the hands of the so-called descendants of King Solomon of Israel, the success of the Gadaa-based offensive-defensive campaigns of the 16th century would give the Oromo, who would willy-nilly join the Abyssinian kingdom an insurmountable political power in the kingdom throughout the 17th century. Nonetheless, even though they had already started to significantly influence the power structure of the kingdom starting during the reign of *Atse* Bakkafa (r. 1721–1730), an Oromo bloodline would ascend to the Abyssinian throne only during the reign of *Atse* Iyoas (r. 1755–1769). This was when the hegemony of the Oromo, which would last until 1855, began in Gondar palace and throughout the kingdom. Following the increase of Oromo's political power in the royal capital, Oromo moved into Gondar, the kingdom's capital. Soon, Gondar became an Oromo town "by all intent and purpose" (Budge, 1928, p. 461), and the kingdom fell under the influence of the northern Oromo. After a brief civil war in which *Atse* Iyoas was killed, the dynasty of the *Yajjuu* Oromo effectively ruled the kingdom for about a century. This includes the era traditionally known as Zamane *Masafent* (1776–1855). The Oromo governed the kingdom by installing puppet *Atses* on the so-called Solomonic throne. The *Yajjuu* Oromo enthroned many "Solomonic" *Atses* on the Abyssinian throne during *Zamane Masafent*. However,

they effectively ruled the kingdom of Abyssinia as did the Abyssinian *Atses* before them, but with more provincial autonomy.

This period of the rule of Abyssinia Proper by the northern Oromo, who had become part of the kingdom, has been lamented by the Abyssinian political and religious elites as the period of division and weakness of the kingdom. Beyond the apparent reality, they did so not to recognise either the historical influences of the Oromo or the period of the *Yajjuu* Oromo dynasty, aka Zamane *Masafent,* in the kingdom's history. Almost every Abyssinian record since then reflects this effort: they portray the northern Oromo as strangers even though they had not only been an integral part of the kingdom for several hundreds of years but also had ruled it for many decades.

Nonetheless, the study shows that the historical influence of the minority northern Oromo on the Abyssinian kingdom from the 16th to 19th centuries was prevalent. Owing to inadequate literary tradition, earlier influences of the Oromo on the Abyssinian kingdom have not been recorded. Since the 16th century, however, the impacts of the Gadaa-based military campaigns of the Oromo on the kingdom have been recorded vividly. The records show that the Oromo had controlled two-thirds of modern Ethiopia by the beginning of the 17th century. Some Abyssinian records show that, though the Oromo were divided, the minority Oromo who were estranged from the rest of the Oromo because of their alliance and integration with the Abyssinian kingdom were successful in ultimately controlling the political power of the kingdom. The *Yajjuu* Oromo successfully ruled the kingdom by installing puppet *Atses* during *Zamane Masafent*. In addition, the Oromo in Gojjam remained the regional masters during the Gondarine period (1632-1855). Except during the brief time when *Ras* Michael Sehul was the kingmaker in Gondar, the Oromo were masters of the Christian Abyssinian kingdom for a century, from 1755 to 1855. This was the century of the Oromo in Abyssinian political history. During this time, the northern minority Oromo communities shaped and reshaped the kingdom's political, social, linguistic, and cultural landscapes. They, too, were being continually assimilated to the Abyssinian identity as their estrangement by the rest of the Oromo of the present Oromia State, who remained mainly under the Gadaa government and in a continued socio-political and military stand-off with the kingdom, continued.

Note to Chapter 8

[1] Some places, including one in Simen in Gondar Zones, are named after this military regiment.

[2] Similarly, *Atse* Bakkafa (r. 1721-1730) used the *Maccaa* Oromo of Damot to subdue the rebellious Tigre and Baher Medr, Wag, and Lasta (Marcus, 1994, p. 46).

[3] According to Tafla (1987), he was crowned in 1604, two years earlier than the year given by Budge (1928) and Munro-Hay (1991). This may be a contention coronation at the local church. Tafla further explains that Susenyos was not widely accepted until he had killed Ya'ekob in 1607. Ya'ekob had taken power succeeding Zedengle in 1604. It is unlikely that Susenyos was crowned at the same time as Ya'eqob. He may have remained a rival uncrowned *Atse* until the death of the restored *Atse*, Ya'eqob. Hence, his coronation must have happened after 1604. This must be the reason why most chronologies of the Abyssinian kings place his reign from 1607 to 1632.

[4] In the Ge'ez version that is used for the translation, Ittuu and Boran, "ኢቱ፡ ወቦረን," not only Ittu, wanted to strike Gojjam.

[5] According to Atsme Giorgis, soldiers in such imperial regiment, usually known as *Gindebel*, were known as *Chewa* in Gondar (Tafla, 1987, pp. 920–921). They lived on government estates. They protected the sovereign, dismantled, moved, and installed the camp of the sovereign when he moved. They also served as a courier. In the Abyssinian army structure, *Chewa* referred to the resident army that took the administration of the locality it resided in on behalf of the king during peacetime while being ready for expedited military deployment during war times. The resident army was deployed strategically across the jurisdiction and fairly distributed among the communities. The local communities were obliged to provide the *Chewa* for its providences through contributions and by working on the fields of the *Chewa*. Wherever they stayed long enough, the *Chewa* became local chiefs and permanent agents of the kingdom.

[6] There were other Oromo names frequented in the court of Susenyos, perhaps because the Atse spoke Oromo because he had learned it when he lived with the Oromo. Oromo was used as a nickname for some important officials as well. For example, the chief steward, Täklä Sellase, who finished the chronicle of Susenyos that Meherko Dengel began, was called ጠኖ (Tinno), a name which in [Oromo] language means "little" (Budge, 1928, p. 384). Tafla (1987) confirms that Täklä Sellase was an Oromo by origin.

[7] It appears that the Oromo were decimated from Zegeh and Korata's towns during Atse Tewodros II's reign. Zegeh was the town in the district of *Maccaa* Oromo on the west shore of Lake Tana near the present city of Bahir Dar. It was destroyed by *Atse* Tewodros II (Reclus, 1892, p. 166). The town of Korata was also probably destroyed during the reign of *Atse* Tewodros II. Korata was the most populous town in the district of Dara Oromo, opposite the town of Zegeh on the east shore about 10 kilometres northeast of Bahir Dar. In 1864, the town's population was reduced by 10,000, from 12,000 to 2,000 (Reclus, 1892, p. 166). Another predominantly Oromo

town where most of the population was annihilated was Sekota in Wollo. However, unlike that of Korata, the cause of the death of the people in Sokota is known. Its population was reduced by three-fourths, from 4,000-5,000 in 1868 to 1 500 in 1881, because of epidemic fever (Reclus, 1892, p. 171).

[8] His son, *Atse* Fasildes, would build a bigger version of it in Gondar, with two-story small houses in it. Local legends suggest that the former was used to baptise converts from Coptic Orthodox to Catholicism after *Atse* Susenyos had declared Catholicism the state religion, while the latter was used to baptise converts from Catholicism to Coptic Orthodox after the restoration of the Coptic Church as the state religion and the expulsion of the Jesuits. Since then, the tradition of renewing one's baptism every year at "Fasil Bath" in Gondar was introduced. It is worth mentioning that, after the conversion of Susenyos, the inpatient, arrogant, and bigot Spaniard Patriarch, Afonso Mendes [Alphonso Mendez], had instructed, among others, re-baptism of all the faithful of the old Church, re-ordaining of all the priests of the old Church, re-consecration, and redecoration of all the old church buildings, all according to Catholic tradition (A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, 1978, cited in Haberland, 1992, p. 731).

[9] These were non-Oromo minorities whom the Maccaa Oromo had recently adopted through the institution of *Moggaasaa*.

[10] She was Susenyos's eldest daughter. She married several husbands (Budge, 1928, p. 384). According to Tafla (1987, p. 985), she first married Abeto Welde Hawaryat. After his death, she married *Dajazmach* Takla Giyorgis. Both of her husbands were chiefs of Tigray. She died around 1653.

[11] According to Bruce (1791, p. 522), Budge (1928, p. 384) and Tafla (1987, p. 942), she was the wife of *Dajazmach* Yolyos (Julius), one of the leading officials of Susenyos who was, according to Tafla, appointed over Merhabete, Gojjam, and Tigray at different times. She exposed her husband's plot against her father, his father-in-law, in 1624, which led to the execution of her husband.

[12] According to Budge (1928, p. 384) and Tafla (1987, p. 917), she married Dajazmach Tekle Giorgis when she was very young. According to Tafla, she was born in Shewa. She died before the age of twenty. After her death, her husband took to his wife, her oldest sister, Wangelawit, and rebelled against his father-in-law.

[13] As noted elsewhere, according to Professor Fikre Tolossa Jiksa (2015), the intermarriage between the Oromo and the Abyssinian royals existed at least four centuries earlier (pp. 188, 194). Such marriage goes as far back as the foundation of the Abyssinian kingdom itself. Jiksa asserts that four such marriages had existed: (1) Edim-Seged had married an Oromo of *Booranaa* by the name Hawi Gifti Mendi, the mother of Tesfa Iyesus (*Atse* Yekunno Amlak, founder of the Abyssinian kingdom); (2) *Atse* Be'ede Mariam had married Queen Eleni, an Oromo daughter of Garad Mohammed Benti from Harar; (3) Amde Tsiyon had married an Oromo, Gifti Dadhi (Jan Mogesa) otherwise known as Queen Seble Wengel; and (4) *Atse* Libne Dengle (r. 1508–1540) had married an Oromo, the daughter of Gebre Meskel Jatema, who took an Oromo throne name, Lalo Jara.

[14] The Oromo political system is the republican Gadaa System. In the Gadaa System, there is no absolute authority to be vested in one man or one family, let alone a hereditary monarchy. As a result, the Oromo do not have kings but elected *Abbaa*

Gadaa or *Abbaa Bokkuu,* whose office term is only eight years with mid-term impeachment, and an elected *Abbaa Gadaa* serve only one term. As the Gadaa System declined and the Abbaa Duulaas (equivalent to war ministers) grew powerful, in some west Oromo societies of Gibie region and Wallagga, an evolved Oromo monarchic system (Mootii) started to be adopted instead of the Gadaa System starting from mid 19ths century; but not during the reign of Susenyos. The reference here is probably made to the local Abbaa Gadaa.

[15] The Oromo who settled in Gojjam, the Wayto people, and members of the army regiments were also converted by force to Christianity. Atsme Giorgis notes, "During the same period, the Agew, the Qemant, and the Falasha were forced by order to accept Christianity; in other words, they became Amhara" (Tafla, 1987, p. 395). This remark signifies that being Amhara and being Christian were synonyms and that the Amhara denoted more of cultural identity than ethnicity.

[16] According to Tafla (1987), Marawa (*Marawwaa*) is an ethnic group of the *Tuulamaa* branch of Oromo who settled in Angot, Gagn, and southern Tigray (pp. 44, 960). They have three subgroups known as Abatti, Ana, Uru (Ur), and referred to as the *Sost Bet* (the three houses) Oromo. The *Raayyaa* Oromo are a branch of *Marawwaa* Oromo. They inhabited the eastern parts of Angot and Wajirat (Between Korem and Enderta) along with *Assaboo* Oromo. They are assimilated with local inhabitants. They have lost their language. They speak Tigrigna and/or Amharic. However, their areas of settlement maintained their ethnic names to date.

[17] *Dajazmach* Bokku was probably his adoptive father.

[18] See *Notes on the Oromo Migration to Central and Northern Ethiopia and their Contribution to the History of their Country,* available at http://www.ethiopia.org/files/OromoMovement.pdf

[19] Tafla (1987) notes: The *Baasoo* Oromo who dominated the region north of Blue Nile up to the south of Lake Tana were wholly assimilated to the Abyssinian culture and language, like the *Galaan* Oromo from *Calliyaa*, the *Jaawwii* Oromo, and other Oromo communities who once dominated the enclave of Blue Nile in Abyssinia Proper (p. 893). The *Baasoo* Oromo army regiment was attacked by the *Gudurru* Oromo in 1699, was defeated, and did not survive the reign of Iyoas I. The Basso and *Liiban* Oromo have lent their name to the Baso Liben Wereda of the East Gojjam Zone of the Amhara State. The people of this Wareda are probably majority Oromo who have been totally assimilated to the Amhara identity for centuries. Similarly, it may be the case for all other Waredas in the State that carry Oromo names to date.

[20] One of the famous warriors of the Baso Oromo clan in the service of Iyasu I was Zamubate (Zambate), probably a corruption of an Oromo name.

[21] The Gondarine period started with establishing the city of Gondar by the order of *Atse* Fasiledes in 1636. Fasiledes wanted to move away from the earlier city–like establishments around Lake Tana where the Jesuits, who converted Atse Susenyos, made Catholicism the state religion, had built stone buildings similar in architecture and material of the buildings to those in Gondar city and introduced the art of painting. The Jesuits had built a palace enclosure of stone buildings, some two stories high with cellars, as their missionary centre and the seat of the catholic *Atse* Susenyos (r. 1607–1632). After the death of Susenyos, Fasiledes declared Orthodox Christianity the state religion and turned the kingdom from its brief conversion. The city of

Gondar became the permanent capital of the kingdom. He built a re-baptismal bath for the kingdom in the city. The bath still exists. It is commonly referred to as Fasiledes Bath. It serves the Orthodox Church as the centre of the annual festival of Epiphany. Because the kingdom and its leaders, and particularly the state Orthodox Tewahdo Church, abhor the history of the conversion of the kingdom and the people into a rival Christian denomination, since then, they have suppressed the existence of such semi-capital cities like Denqez, Gorgora, and Guzara, in the north of Lake Tana districts and have portrayed the history of the capital city of Abyssinian as if it started at Gondar. The Abyssinian historians largely remained silent on the existence of such cities and such advances in building architecture in the kingdom before Gondar. This is perhaps because if they acknowledged the existence of such cities and advanced in building, they could not avoid mentioning the Jesuits and their contributions. One hardly comes across mentions of the Church and palace buildings constructed by the Jesuit mission in the region north of Lake Tana and south of Gondar city, although the long-neglected ruins could still be found. Learned Church elites taught the laity that the ruins of the Catholic missionaries were abodes of an evil sprite. Out of such misguided teaching, the local faithful nocked the ruins down as if they were crushing the evil spirits that they have been told abode in them. Such a self-centred attitude of Abyssinian literary elites has continued to treat the contributions of the Oromo correspondingly.

[22] For more details of Oromo who had left their fingerprints in the Abyssinian kingdom, see Tolossa (1992) "Nobles of Oromo Descent Who Ruled Ethiopia," available at http://www.ethiopianreview.com/index/33633

[23] Waragna appears to be a corruption of an Oromo word "*waraana*." Sir E. A. W. Budge (1928) states it means rebel (p. 448). He also states that Waragna was a captain of one thousand picked soldiers. Therefore, it is very likely that the name meant "*waraana"* (fighter, in *Afaan Oromoo*), not "waragna" (one who talks a lot in Amharic). "Waragna" may have been derived from the Oromo word *waraana*. In this context, "*waraana*" means "army" in *Afaan Oromoo*. After all, it is clear that "Waragna" was a leader of a segment of an army, and he was an Oromo.

It is also likely that the name might have reflected an element of the Oromo socio-political system as a symbolic name. Even though the Oromo group that "Waragna" represented was under Abyssinian rule, the Oromo had maintained their Gadaa democracy parallel to the Abyssinian monarchy, particularly before the 19th century. The Oromo used to fill the position of an Abyssinian appointee chief with their elected local *Abbaa Gadaas* or had a parallel local Gadaa government of their own. The Gadaa System of the Oromo was finally banned only in the late 19th century by Atse Menelik II after his total – political, economic, and social – conquest of the Oromo. The other connection, though distant, could be that the name might have originated from an Oromo phrase "*waraana sadeen*". The phrase sometimes denotes the highest officials of the Gadaa System. In an Oromo republican Gadaa System, the three most powerful elected officials, the *Abbaa Gadaa* Apex and his two deputies (equivalent to the president and his two vice presidents in the Western republican democratic system) are commonly known as *waraana sadeen* (Baissa, 2004, p. 101).

[24] The Oromo language, *Afaan Oromoo* or simply Oromo, has been serving as a cultural highway in this vast territory of the Horn of Africa. It is the second most widely spread indigenous language in Africa and the third Afro-Asiatic language in the world, next to Arabic and Hausa, serving as a mother tongue for around forty million Oromo and as a second language for one to two million non-Oromo (Mole, 2014, pp. 24–25). In Ethiopia, many other nations speak *Afaan Oromoo* as their second language. These include Sidama, Berta, Adare, Annuak, Koma, Kulo, Kaficho, and Guraghe (Oromos, 2017). It is spoken in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, and Tanzania. According to Sir Walis Budge, there are three *Afaan Oromoo* dialects. These are those spoken by "the Arabs in the east of Ethiopia and the country north of Shoa," those spoken "near Somaliland and the Indian Ocean," and those spoken in the region "south of Abyssinia" (Budge, 1928, p. 617).

[25] The names of the two *Eteges* are closely related in meaning. In the Amharic language, Wubit simply means "beauty." Mentewab also means the same but implies that she does not need to beautify. The *Eteges* were an example of Oromo beauty.

[26] "Sehul" was an attribute or nickname given to him because of his astuteness. Therefore, his name, Ras Michael Sehul, means Ras Michael the astute.

[27] According to Atsme Giorgis, Ras Gugsa married Walata Feqer of Gojjam, a granddaughter of *Etege* Mentewab and the daughter of *Atse* Tekle Giorgis, the last *Atse* of the "Solomonic" Dynasty in Gondar. Note that there was another Ras Gugsa much later in Abyssinian history. He was the son of *Ras* Wale and nephew of *Etege* Taitu.

[28] Fasil was a close associate to Iyoas I. He was an Oromo. They supported each other. Fasil tried to help his master against Ras Michael Sehul, who deposed and killed him. After the death of Iyo'as I, Fasil fought several battles against Ras Michael Sehul until he was finally defeated.

[29], The Jaawwii Oromo, went to Gojjam around 1622 with *Atse* Susenyos (Tafla, 1987, p. 919). Tafla further notes that Iyasu I settled the *Jaawwii* first in the neighbourhood of Azzezo but later in Damot. The *Jaawwii* Oromo were subsequently recruited into an army division with 5,000 to 8,000 men, including non-Oromo, according to the oral tradition of Damot and Begemeder. The army division was *Jawwee*, which in *Afaan Oromoo* means python. It was an Abyssinian tradition to name an army division based on the majority of the army members where either their ethnicity or place of origin was used for the naming. The tradition was common until the mid-19th century. According to Tafla (1987), in the late 19th century, *Atse* Menelik II had an army regiment called Gondarine, named after most of its members from Gondar. They were sent initially to Shewa by *Atse* Tewodros for a battle against Menelik, the then king of Shewa, but defected to Menelik's camp. The mistreatment of the formers who had killed some of his armies in mass might have encouraged them to join the latter. Under Menelik, they became the Gondarine regiment of the imperial army. The regiment was posted in Wallagga with the Oromo monarch instructed by *Atse* Menelik II to feed them in the 1910s, where Gebre Igziabiher used to pay an annual provision worth 23,000 Thalars (Triulzi, 2002, p. 60).

[30] A servant of Mariam Barea killed him in 1768 in Begemeder. Later, however, Mariam Barea himself took refuge among *Walloo* Oromo, who eventually handed him to *Atse* Iyoas I after the combined army of the Nigus and Ras Michael Sehul defeated

his Begemeder army. Lubo, whose brother (Berhule), a servant of Mariam Barea, had killed, killed him.

[31] According to Atsme Giorgis (see Tafla, 1987, p. 339), *Atse* Susenyos used to hand over the captive children of the pagans (probably mainly Oromo children) to Jesuit missionaries. The missionaries would instruct the children reading, writing, and other vocational skills, i.e., carpentry, masonry, and other related skills. The Jesuits would then present the *Atse* one or two thousand highly skilled servants serving as scribes and masons. These Jesuits–trained children of the "pagan" would build the palace enclosure at Gondar together with selected Portuguese, Spanish, and Indian artisans (See Tafla, 1987, p. 365). Later, in 1665, in the first year of the reign of *Atse* Yohannes, all European workers, including teachers, were expelled, ending the presence of communities of Europeans in Abyssinian for 133 years (Tafla, 1987, p. 409). This would bring Abyssinia's dawn of self–imposed isolation from the rest of the Christian world for centuries.

[32] According to Atsme Giorgis (See Tafla, 1987, p. 629), Gugsa was a native of *Yajjuu*. His father was Abba Bateyye. The dynasty of Abba Bateyye was called Warra Sheka. Just before Gugsa ascended the pinnacle of the power of Abyssinian kingdom after fleeing to *Warra Hemanuu* to Amde the Great, another brave Oromo by the name Goji from *Baarentuu* was ruling the Oromo of *Raayyaa* and *Asaboo* junior sub-moieties. He moved into *Yajjuu* and settled the Oromo in *Yajjuu*, Shedeho, Dawunt, Wadla, Delanta, Maqet, and Checheho. However, because he did not rule according to the Gadaa System, through *Luba* and *Caffee*: hence, the *Walloo* Oromo did not accept him. During this time, the *Karrayyuu* and the *Walloo* separated. The *Booranaa* also severed close connection with *Karrayyuu* and Wollo. The unity of the Oromo became loose, and they started to fight with each other.

[33] Merso was the paternal uncle of *Etege* Tayitu.

[34] Tekle Giorgis was restored to the throne as puppet *Atse* five times. He died in 1817. His reign was known as *"ፍጻሜ መንግስት"*, meaning, "end of government" to mark the end of the rule of Abyssinian kingdom by Abyssinians and the start of the rule of the kingdom by the Oromo.

[35] According to Atsme Giorgis, he meant that the dead *Ras* Mared of Gojjam was an Oromo (Tafla, 1987, p. 439).

[36] *Ras* Alula was the son of *Ras* Gugsa. His brothers were Yemam, Mareyye, and Dori.

[37] *Ras* Ali II was the son of Alula Gugsa and Wayzero Menen of Wollo.

[38] Tawabech was about 15 years old when she married Kasa. She died in 1851 and survived by one son.

[39] "Amara" appears to be the ethnic name of the people at the core of the formation of the kingdom of Abyssinia. They were originally from the geographic region known by this name in the border region between the present southern Wollo and northern Shewa. Historically, Amhara was the vast territory that included all the provinces of Abyssinia except Tigre. In other words, it was the present Amhara State. "Amhara" is the country of the "Amara" people as Oromia is for the Oromo and Somalia is for the Somali. In Amharic, both "Amhara" and "Amara" are spelled the same, *ዐማራ*.

[40] Professor Fikre Tolossa Jiksa, states, "though not made public, *Lij* Iyasu was crowned in secrete as Iyasu IV in 1906 in Addis Ababa," and argues that if he were not crowned 'King of Kings,' he could not have bestowed the title of King to his father, *Ras* Michael (Jiksa, 2015, p. 241). It is however clear from this recent history that *Lij* Iyasu was never formally crowned.

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